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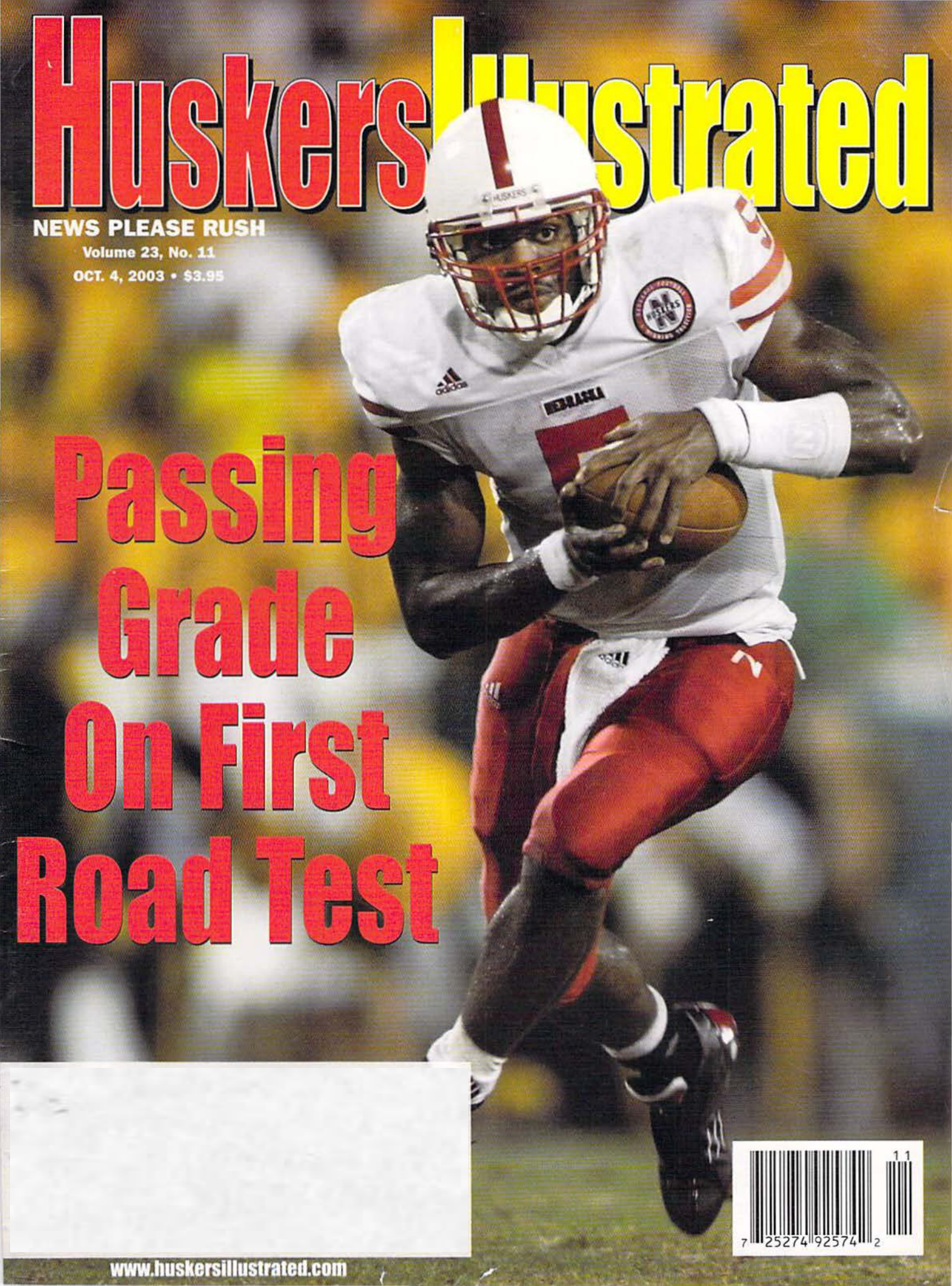

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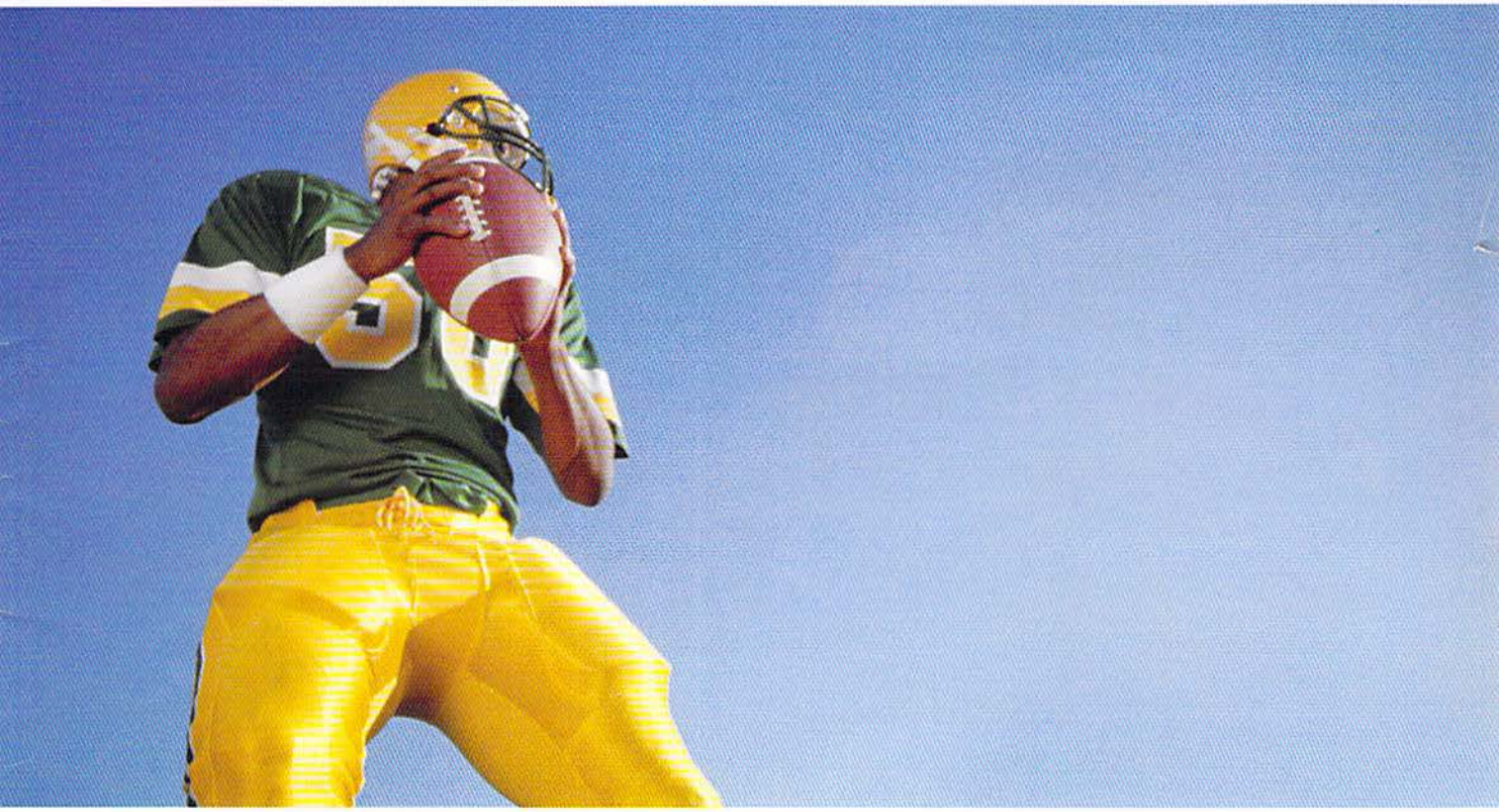

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FROM THE EDITOR

Winning Combination

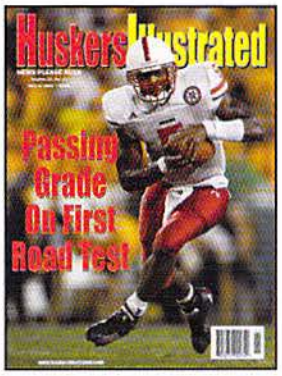
Veterans contribute, along with young Huskers

Brian HILL

WITH NEBRASKA leading Southern Mississippi 31-7 in the fourth quarter, many of the reserves who made the road trip to Hattiesburg, Miss., were getting their chance to play.

Although playing time is important to any Cornhusker, it had to be especially satisfying for the player wearing No. 70.

Jason Lohr played in all 12 games as a true freshman in 1998 and started 14 straight games before suffering a season-ending knee injury in the Notre Dame game in 2001. He was given an opportunity to come back for a fifth year in 2002, but he suffered another season-ending knee injury during a fall scrimmage.



Lohr was granted a sixth year to complete his eligibility but had been slowed by back problems for most of the fall. He suited up for the Penn State game but didn't play and was listed as the No. 3 nose tackle on the depth chart entering the Southern Miss game.

Lohr, who has 90 career tackles, including 15 for losses and nine sacks, did not add to those totals in the Thursday night ESPN game. But having the 24-year-old, who has persevered so much, back on the field had to be inspirational to his teammates.

Lohr's return wasn't the only feel-good story in the Huskers' 38-14 victory.

There was fifth-year senior I-back Robin Miller, who had eight carries for 38 yards in his career, zipping 47 yards for a touchdown with 1:48 remaining. Miller, who was stopped for no gain on the previous play, actually finished as Nebraska's leading rusher with the two rushes for 47 yards.

After living by the run in the first three victories, Nebraska showed the ability to strike through the air, with Jammal Lord throwing touchdown passes of 44 and 43 yards in span of less than two minutes of the third quarter. They were the first touchdown passes of the season. The second long scoring strike was the first career catch by redshirt freshman Isaiah Fluellen, who just moved up to No. 2 on the depth chart.

Fluellen is one of many young players who have contributed to the 4-0 start. The group includes five true freshmen — Andy Birkel, Joe Dailey, David Dyches, Lane Kelly and Brandon Teamer, who are the subjects of our feature story in this week's edition of Huskers Illustrated. Sophomore wide receiver Mark LeFlore, who played last year as a true freshman, is the subject of our player profile.

Of course, there's much, much more on the latest victory in the first game on the road, where Lord and Nebraska often struggled last season.

Despite being sacked five times and finishing with a net of 6 yards rushing, Lord came through, hitting the two touchdown passes and scoring on a 6-yard option to the short side, which he audibled to in scoring Nebraska's first touchdown. And it all came in a hostile road environment.

"I'm just trying to get better," Lord said afterward. "It's always good to play on the road and throw the ball deep and what not and win a game like today and move on from it."

That's just what the Huskers are doing with a combination of youth and experience, from true freshmen to a sixth-year senior. ■

ON THE COVER

Nebraska senior quarterback Jammal Lord looks for an opening in the Southern Mississippi defense. *Photo by Derek Lippincott.*

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Huskers Illustrated

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Even though NU has experienced defensive tackles, Brandon Teamer (above) was among five true freshmen who played in the first three games. *By Mike Babcock*

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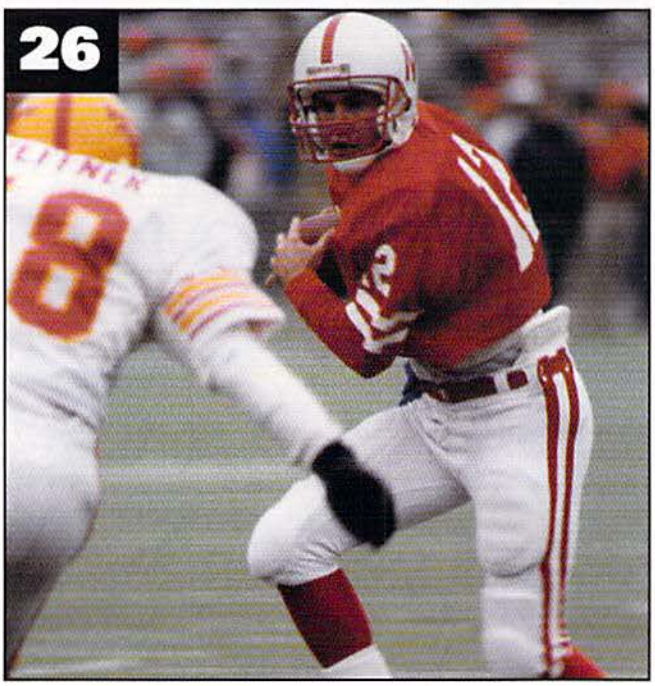


Continuity Key

A year ago, it was the loss of Shane Komine. Now, it's the losses of Jeff Leise, Matt Hopper and Aaron Marsden. That's just the nature of college baseball.

"Every year, we lose guys, and every year, the focus tends to be on the guys we've lost," Cornhusker Coach Mike Anderson says. But successful programs adjust.

"It's a huge emphasis of ours to make sure we have quality freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors in this program," says Anderson, who is preparing his second team.

A balance of youngsters and veterans helps to provide a program with continuity.

The Cornhuskers began fall practice on Sept. 15, and during 22 practices, culminating with the annual Red-White series, he will look to identify replacements for those who have been lost.

Who some of those replacements will be, "we don't know right now," Anderson says.

Others, he does. Senior catcher John Grose, for instance, has already taken a leadership role, as has junior outfielder Daniel Bruce. "He's in that category, too," says Anderson.

Junior Curtis Ledbetter, the All-Big 12 designated hitter, is a known quantity, as is senior right-hander Quinton Robertson, a first-team all-conference selection in his first season at Nebraska.

Robertson was among the unknowns last season, after transferring from Texarkana College, stepping up when an elbow injury sidelined sophomore left-hander Brian Duensing.

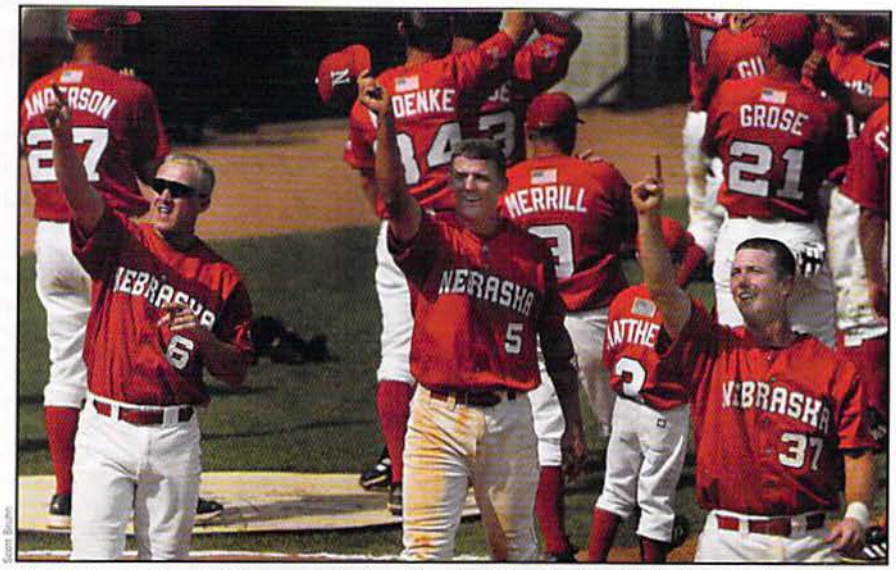
"We weren't talking about Quinton that much, although in the back of our minds, we put him in that role," Anderson says. "We did have anticipation that we'd have a guy like that take off."

Robertson took off in the form of a 10-2 record, with a 4.23 earned-run average.

"Each year, hopefully, we're preparing guys for that," Anderson says.

Robertson complemented Marsden last season and now looks to succeed him as the No. 1 starter on a staff that includes veterans Phil Shirek, Zach Kroenke, Tim Schoeninger, Mike Sillman and Jeremy Becker. In addition, Anderson is cautiously optimistic about the possibility of Duensing's return.

Schoeninger, a reliever last season as a freshman, will get a look at starting. "That doesn't mean he's going to earn that spot, but he's going to have the opportunity," says Anderson.



The Nebraska baseball team celebrates after clinching the Big 12 Conference championship last season.

So are some of the newcomers, "two or three pitching-wise," prominent among them freshmen Tony Watson and Matt Foust and junior college transfer Brett Jensen, according to Anderson.

Leise and Hopper are the most significant losses among position players, with Drew Anderson leaving early by way of the draft. However, counting Ledbetter as a first baseman, a starting infield returns, with second baseman Jake Mullinax, shortstop Joe Simokaitis and third baseman Alex Gordon.

Ledbetter batted .348 with 13 home runs and 54 runs-batted-in.

"If somebody told you that you had your starting infield back, you'd be pretty excited," Anderson says. "It's just that we don't have any depth." Or at least, any proven depth.

Bruce and senior Brandon Fusilier return in the outfield, another area of opportunity.

By the Red-White series, tentatively scheduled for the week of Oct. 7-12, some of the newcomers will have asserted themselves. "We've got some very good talent again," says Anderson. "But in order for us to come out in the spring and develop that and do things right, we've got to develop team chemistry from the get-go. When I say chemistry, I mean it from a physical standpoint and from a mental standpoint. We've got to know what type of lineup we're trying to create, not only get along with each other."

And of course, "we're trying to figure out what our starting rotation is going to be," he says.

The standard by which Anderson's second team will be measured is high. The Cornhuskers have won two Big 12 championships in the past three seasons, and they have advanced to NCAA regionals in five consecutive seasons, reaching the College World Series in 2001 and 2002.

Such goals are assumed now, beginning with the conference title. "It's not something, I think, we need to announce to the world," says Anderson. "But it's something we need to set as a standard for our team each day, that our goal is to win the conference championship.

"That needs to be a goal every year, and then let the post-season happen the way it needs to happen, try to be hot at that time, try to get ourselves going. Not many good things can happen unless you win that conference championship. So it's a standard, how we approach things on a daily basis."

He isn't dwelling on those who have moved on, however successful they were.

"In college baseball, you have to anticipate that," he says. "I think we have." ■

FALL ROSTER

The fall baseball roster includes 39 players, with 17 newcomers among them. Senior outfielder Brandon Fusilier is among the fall-practice missing, following surgery, as are pitchers Dustin Timm and Brian Duensing. Curtis Ledbetter and Joe Simokaitis also are limited following surgeries.

Jeremy Becker, LHP, 5-11, 215, Jr.
Kevin Belcher, OF, 6-2, 175, RFr.
*Johnny Bowden, C, 6-3, 210, Fr.
Jesse Boyer, OF, 6-1, 185, Jr.
Daniel Bruce, OF, 5-11, 190, Sr.
Brian Duensing, LHP, 6-0, 185, So.
*Matt Foust, RHP, 6-3, 215, Fr.
*Brad Furnish, LHP, 6-1, 175, Fr.
Brandon Fusilier, OF, 6-3, 215, Sr.
Alex Gordon, INF, 6-1, 210, So.
John Grose, C, 5-10, 190, Sr.
Mike Harmelink, RHP, 6-1, 180, RsFr.
*Jared Hertzel, RHP, 6-0, 195, Jr.
Darren Hoffart, C, 6-2, 200, So.
*Brett Jensen, RHP, 6-7, 185, So.
*James Jensen, OF, 6-3, 200, Fr.
*Braden Keith, OF, 6-0, 160, Fr.
*Jon Klausing, RHP, 6-6, 185, Fr.
Zach Kroenke, LHP, 6-2, 180, So.
Curtis Ledbetter, INF, 6-3, 220, Jr.
Andy Lomax, C, 6-1, 210, RsFr.
*Mike McDonald, LHP, 6-4, 185, Fr.
*David Moore, OF, 6-3, 200, Fr.
Jake Mullinax, INF, 6-1, 200, Sr.
Justin Pekarek, LHP, 6-3, 215, Sr.
*Matthew Pike, RHP, 6-6, 205, Fr.
Quinton Robertson, RHP, 6-5, 205, Sr.
Tim Schoeninger, RHP, 6-3, 205, So.
Phil Shirek, RHP, 6-3, 210, Jr.
*Colin Shockey, OF, 5-10, 165, Jr.
Mike Sillman, RHP, 6-1, 180, Sr.
Joe Simokaitis, INF, 6-1, 185, Jr.
*Al Smith, 1B, 6-1, 220, Fr.
Chad Steele, C, 5-10, 190, So.
*Beau Sullivan, 1B, 6-2, 215, Jr.
Dustin Timm, RHP, 6-3, 185, Jr.
*Tyler Vaughn, INF, 6-2, 195, Fr.
*Tony Watson, LHP, 6-4, 180, Fr.
*B.J. Wierzbicki, RHP, 6-6, 220, So.
*Newcomer

2004 SCHEDULE

The Cornhuskers are scheduled to play nine games against NCAA Super Regional qualifiers, among them College World Series champion Rice at the Crowne Plaza/Rice Invitational on Feb. 28. They also are slated for tournaments at the Metrodome in Minneapolis and PETCO Park in San Diego.

PETCO PARK will be the new home of the San Diego Padres.

Feb. 20 — at New Mexico; **21** — Northwestern at Albuquerque, N.M.; **22** — Kent State at Albuquerque, N.M.; **27** — Northwestern (La.) State at Houston; **28** — at Rice; **29** — North Carolina at Houston

March 5 — Florida State at Minneapolis; **6** — West Virginia at Minneapolis; **7** — at Minnesota; **12** — UCLA at San Diego; **13** — San Diego State at San Diego; **14** — San Diego at San Diego; **16-17** — Western Illinois; **19-21** — Boston College; **23** — at Creighton; **26-28** — Kansas; **30-31** — Wisconsin-Milwaukee

April 2-4 — at Kansas State; **6-7** — New Mexico; **9-11** — Texas Tech; **13** — Wichita State; **16-18** — at Missouri; **20** — Creighton; **23-25** — at Texas; **27-28** — Northern Colorado; **30-May 2** — Texas A&M

May 8-10 — at Oklahoma State; **11-12** — Northern Iowa; **14-16** — at Baylor; **18** — at Creighton (Rosenblatt Stadium); **21-23** — Oklahoma; **26-30** — Big 12 Tournament at Arlington, Texas

June 4-6 — NCAA Regionals; **11-13** — NCAA Super Regionals; **18-28** — College World Series ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

PREPARING FOR THE UNKNOWN

Alex Gordon had a solid freshman season, hitting .319 with seven home runs and 48 runs-batted-in. His 13 doubles were tied for the team high. Curtis Ledbetter also hit 13 doubles.

Despite his success, Coach Mike Anderson expects improvement. "Alex, last year at this time, was preparing for something unknown," says Anderson. "Now, he knows what the Big 12 is about. He knows what the post-season is about. And hopefully, he's preparing for beyond that."

Alex Gordon

All of "these new kids" are facing the same thing, Anderson says. "We've got to challenge them, prepare them for what is unknown. They have to put a lot of trust and faith in us."

Gordon apparently has been preparing for the known during the off-season.

"If you take a peek at him, he's bigger, stronger and faster," says Anderson. "You take one look at his arms, the way he's been lifting and working out . . . he's going through that phase right now where he's saying, 'I've got to prepare, I've got to be a better baseball player than I was last year.' "

REAL UTILITY GUY

Anderson didn't plan to do much experimentation with players during fall practice. However, Colin Shockey, a transfer from LaVista, Neb., by way of Iowa Western Community College, was going to get a look in right field and at second base as well as in center field, as a successor to Jeff Leise.

Oh yes, "he might even pitch for us," Anderson says. "He's a good athlete."

DRAFTEES

Three Cornhusker newcomers, all of them pitchers, were selected in the Major League Draft in June: left-hander Tony Watson and right-handers Matthew Pike and Brett Jensen.

Watson, from Dallas Center High School in Grimes, Iowa, was the first of the three selected, by the Florida Marlins in the 23rd round. He turned down the Marlins' $200,000 offer, says Anderson.

Pike, from Centennial High School in Pueblo, Colo., was a 32nd-round pick of the Boston Red Sox, and Jensen, from Eagle Grove, Iowa, by way of Iowa Central Community College, was a 45th-round pick of the Baltimore Orioles. Pike is the brother of Cornhusker offensive lineman Gary Pike.

In addition, recruits Ian Bladergroen and Lance Schartz were drafted and opted to sign.

GAME TIME IS FUN TIME

Like those he coaches, defensive coordinator Bo Pelini enjoys game day. "It's putting all your work to the test, watching those players run around," he said the week following the opener.

"I believe to a man they had a lot of fun out there. And that's the name of the game, having fun, letting these guys enjoy what they're doing. This is going to be the greatest time of their lives, hopefully, and that brings enjoyment for all the hard work we've put in."

Winning, of course, is a necessary adjunct.

GOING TO THE HOT HAND

Earlier this season, Coach Frank Solich was asked if he would prefer to have a single I-back get 20 to 25 carries a game. "I'd like to have a Heisman Trophy back, give him 25 to 30 carries," Solich replied. "If one of these guys develops into that caliber of a back, he will get 25 to 30 carries.

"Otherwise, we'll play to the strengths of our backs and that could mean each of them could get some reps. It could mean if one guy's hot and he's playing exceptionally well that he gets 25 to 30 carries."

Senior Josh Davis got 32 carries and gained 179 yards against Penn State. You do the math.

Jemayel Phillips

BIG SMOOTH IS GONE

Redshirted freshman Jemayel Phillips left the team the week after the Penn State game. The 6-foot-6, 365-pound offensive guard from Winnfield, La., nicknamed "Big Smooth," has "got issues he needs to handle," Solich said in announcing his departure.

Solich would not elaborate. "It's just a closed matter at this point," he said.

Phillips was listed third on the preseason depth chart, sharing second team with sophomore walk-on Brandon Koch at right guard, behind junior Jake Anderson. ■

Moving Forward

Stuntz says decision to redshirt second-most difficult he's made

Mike BABCOCK

THE EASY WAY would have been to decline interview requests. Mike Stuntz considered it. Not talking was "very tempting," he said after practice on the Tuesday following the Penn State game.

As he walked from the grass fields north of Memorial Stadium to the wide gate where reporters waited, however, he decided that wasn't how he would handle the situation.

"I didn't want to look like I was trying to avoid any tough questions," he said. So he stopped and answered the questions, some more than once, regarding his future at Nebraska.

Moments earlier, Coach Frank Solich had announced that the junior quarterback from Council Bluffs, Iowa, had decided to redshirt, a decision ostensibly based on his having dropped from second to third on the depth chart, behind true freshman Joe Dailey, the previous week.

The decision was made on the Thursday prior to the Penn State game. Stuntz said he had discussed redshirting with the coaches throughout the week and come to the decision in talking with quarterbacks coach Turner Gill that Thursday night. "It's not like it was a snap decision," said Stuntz.

"It's not like I pulled a fast one on Coach. Everybody is on the same page."

He participated in the team's walk-through the next afternoon but didn't suit up for the game, and wasn't even at Memorial Stadium, choosing to watch the game on television, instead.

Not being at the game wasn't a big deal, he said. "I don't remember redshirts suiting up. The majority of guys who redshirt don't suit up for games, so I really didn't see it as anything abnormal."

Stuntz is not a normal redshirt, of course. He agreed to a temporary move to wide receiver and played as a true freshman then returned to quarterback and backed up Jammal Lord last season.

Ironically, he threw Nebraska's most memorable pass in recent seasons as a wide receiver, teaming with quarterback Eric Crouch for 63 yards and a touchdown against Oklahoma. After the game, he said he hoped when his career was finished he would be remembered for more than that one pass.

He struggled at times during the spring, but went into preseason practice at second on the depth chart, in part because of the transfer of redshirted freshman Curt Dukes. He fell to third the week of the Utah State game — in which Dailey took a dozen snaps and solidified his back-up position.

Other factors entered in, however, according to Stuntz. "There were a lot of things that went into the decision really, not all of which I care to get into right now," he said.

Stuntz revealed more than many in his situation would have, or could have. The decision was the second-most difficult he has made in athletics, he said, the first being which of several scholarship offers to accept after earning prep All-America recognition at St. Albert High School.

"That was pretty tough," he said. "But this is also very tough."

And it's tougher having played in 10 games as a true freshman, "going from so much excitement. It's certainly not one of the high points of my career. It's been kind of an up-and-down ride."

Stuntz hasn't thought about returning to wide receiver, and the coaches haven't suggested such a return. Would he be receptive to such a suggestion? "Probably not," he said.

Mike Stuntz played in 10 games as a freshman two years ago.

But, he added, "Who knows what's going to happen."

There is even an element of uncertainty about the redshirt, which could be discarded if Lord or Dailey were to be sidelined for any length of time. "Something could change it," said Stuntz.

"I guess I would call it a redshirt, but I wouldn't call it a done deal."

He has tried to be philosophical about the situation. He hasn't second-guessed coming to Nebraska, or skipping a redshirt as a true freshman or any other decisions related to his athletic career.

"You can't change what happened in the past," he said. "You just have to move on. If I sat here and dwelled on last year or two years ago, what I could have done differently, I'd drive myself crazy.

"So I just show up every day and see what I can do. Then I move on."

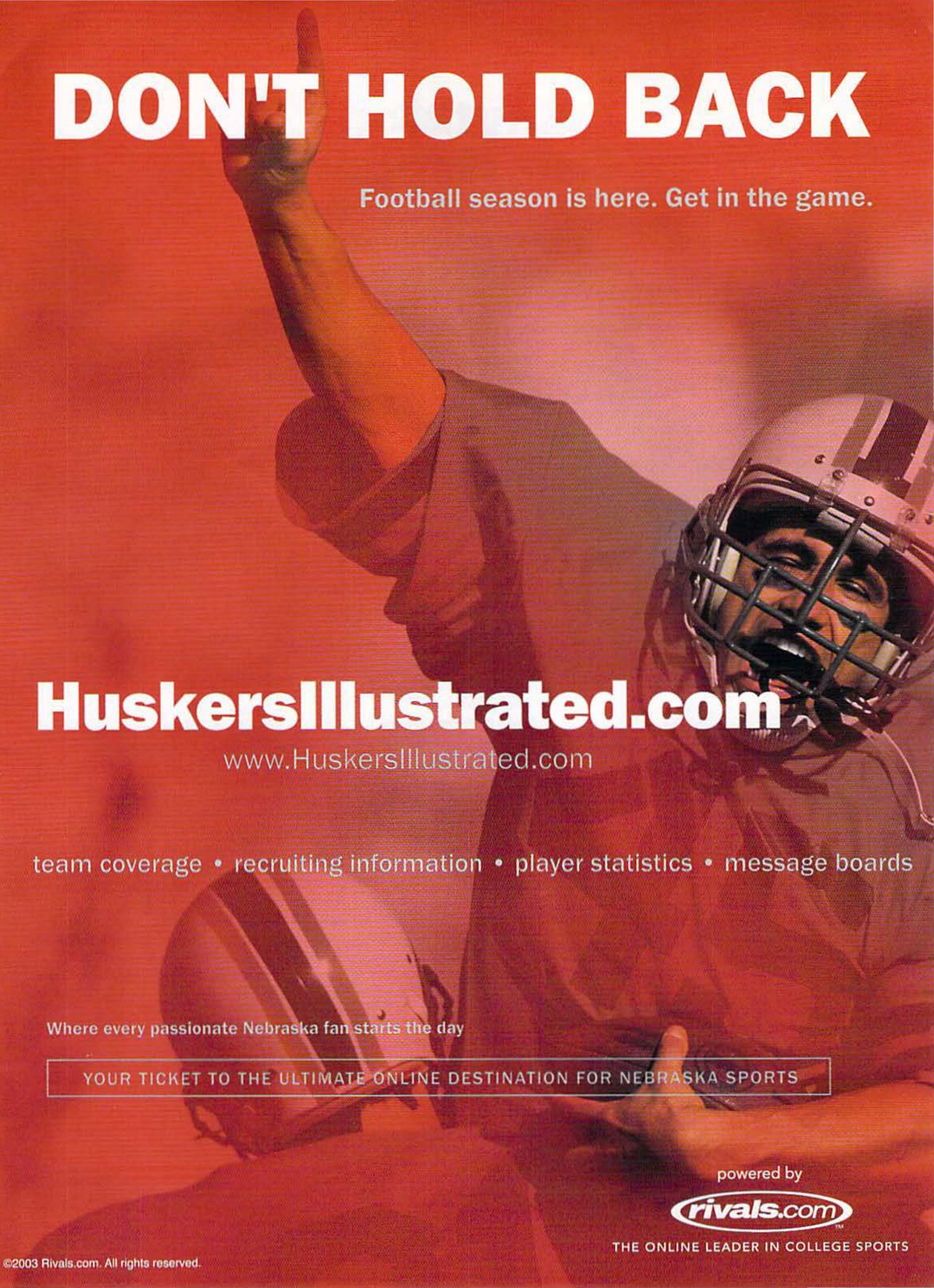
He was asked if he would be at Nebraska next season.

"As far as I know right now," he said. But apparently that could change.

"People keep telling me stuff like this builds character, and, you know, I'm going to take their word for it, hope they're right because I'm building some serious character right now," he said.

Whether or not he believes that, his willingness to answer reporters' questions revealed much about his character. "I guess I don't really like ducking from anything," he said.

"They told me I didn't have to talk to you guys, but I kind of felt like that would give people the wrong impression of me, that I was trying to avoid something, and I'm not. Things could have turned out better; I'll be honest. But it's where I am now. And I'm trying to move forward from there." ■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Anything Can Happen

Big 12's September results prove that you just never know

Curt McKEEVER

IT'S OCTOBER — you've got the Big 12 Conference's contenders separated from the pretenders, right?

If so, Mack Brown would appreciate a call.

"College football is as crazy as I've ever seen it. It's really, really hard to tell what's going on," Texas' head coach said recently. "We ought to get smart one day and do away with preseason polls, because nobody knows how good they are until probably October."

You notice that Brown qualified his statement, because this year it may take longer.

Witness September.

On the second Saturday, Brown's sixth-ranked team got manhandled in its home stadium by an unranked Arkansas squad picked by many to finish in the lower half of the Southeastern Conference's West Division. No. 17 Colorado was crushed in Boulder by Washington State.

The next week, sixth-ranked Kansas State dropped its first home non-conference decision in 42 games — to Marshall, which entered with a 1-2 record. Across the state, Kansas was securing its first three-game winning streak since 1997 to move to 3-1, while Missouri was improving to 4-0 for the first time since 1981.

To do so, the Tigers had to drive for a touchdown and convert a two-point conversion to force overtime — against winless Division I-AA Middle Tennessee State.

"It goes to show you you better be ready to play anytime," second-year Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said. "We were very fortunate."

More and more coaches, and teams, are getting that education through the school of hard knocks.

While Kansas State's loss to Marshall was the biggest surprise of the early season, on the same day the Thundering Herd took down the Wildcats, fellow Mid-American Conference members Northern Illinois and Toledo joined in on the parity party.

Northern Illinois won at Alabama, while Toledo, which somehow lured Pittsburgh to play on the road, knocked off the Panthers.

Still think dynasties will be hard to crumble? Consider that after the third weekend of September, Oklahoma had won its past six games. Ohio State (19) and Southern Cal (11) were the only schools with longer active streaks.

Fifteen of the teams ranked in The Associated Press preseason poll had losses, and nine teams ranked in the preseason were no longer among the top 25.

The 85-scholarship limit means there's plenty of talent for the MAC or WAC. Maybe the Bowl Championship Series-eligible programs have better depth, but everybody has good players.

"You'd better get ready to play every week and you better not turn the ball over," Brown said. "There aren't many teams in the country that couldn't beat you if you don't play well."

Bill Snyder says the key is how K-State responds to the loss.

The same day that K-State was upset, Texas Tech rolled up 681 yards on North Carolina State — and got routed 49-21.

"I've never had this much offense with this little productivity before," Red Raiders coach Mike Leach said after watching his quarterback, B.J. Symons, throw for a Big 12-record 586 yards.

He wasn't the only Big 12 coach trying to evaluate what went wrong.

Colorado, after opening the season with a pair of thrilling victories against Colorado State and UCLA, got outscored a combined 94-33 losing to Washington State and Florida State.

This against a defense that CU coach Gary Barnett touted in the preseason as having the potential to be as good as the Buffaloes have had in a "long, long time."

After the loss to Washington State, he acknowledged that he had misread things. And after watching a repeat in Tallahassee, he was talking about making personnel changes.

"We've got a bye week, we're going to need it," Barnett said. "We're a long way away from being able to compete for the North (Division) title."

Maybe. Maybe not. In today's world of big-time college football, anything can happen.

For all its defensive problems, Colorado was no further away from winning a third straight Big 12 North crown.

K-State could still run the table.

Although the Wildcats may choose to beef up against lighter weight non-conference opponents, they know how to slug with the heavyweights. Since 1996, K-State has the second-best overall record in league games. Better than Oklahoma or Texas, which have played tougher schedules.

"How do we respond? That will be the defining factor in what kind of football team we are and will be throughout the year," Kansas State coach Bill Snyder said following the loss to Marshall. "We are no further away from what I would hope we really wanted to achieve five hours ago. If indeed we want the opportunity to play in Kansas City again (in the Big 12 championship on Dec. 6), we are in the same position that we were."

Of course, Snyder was quick to note how much the Wildcats had to get corrected before they had a chance to achieve that goal.

Around the league, you can bet there were 11 other coaches saying the same thing about their clubs.

"You're having teams that have been struggling in recent years that are really playing well," Iowa State's Dan McCarney said.

Of course, he wasn't about to guess whether that will be the case a month from now. But given some of the crazy results in September, long-term forecasts wouldn't mean much, anyway. ■

Curt McKeever *is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the* Lincoln Journal Star. *In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.*

Restoring Confidence

'Our guys are playing hard, and we're getting a lot of hats around the ball'

Terry DOUGLASS

WHILE THERE'S LITTLE DEBATE that Nebraska's defense has played well in the early stages of this season, first-year defensive coordinator Bo Pelini is quick to point out that the Blackshirts' statistical dominance is due in large part to the Cornhuskers' offense.

Yes, that's right, the offense.

While NU has had its share of trouble scoring touchdowns in the red zone, Pelini said one thing the offense has excelled at is controlling the football. The Huskers owned a staggering 38:17-21:43 edge in time of possession through the first three games.

Last season, Nebraska's defense allowed an average of five yards per play, compared to 3.7 yards per play after three games this year. However, the biggest difference might be that the Huskers have nearly 25 percent more offensive plays than their opponents. In 2002, NU's opponents enjoyed a 1,008-959 edge in offensive snaps.

"It all works hand in hand," Pelini said. "It's a team game."

That was never more evident than in an 18-10 win over Penn State. Nebraska opened the second half with a 16-play, 80-yard drive for a touchdown that shaved 8:12 off the clock. At the end of the third quarter, the Nittany Lions had just five plays from scrimmage.

"It was unbelievable," Pelini said. "Our offense chewed up about eight minutes there, then we were able to get off the field in a couple plays, and they were able to take some more time off.

"That goes a long way toward playing good defense. The offense will say, 'Yeah, we want to score more than 18 points,' but they did a phenomenal job."

Bo Pelini has simplified the Huskers' defensive scheme.

Phenomenal would also describe the resurgence of the Huskers' defense, which took the national lead in total defense after the Penn State game. Nebraska also ranked among the nation's top 10 in scoring defense.

To fully understand the scope of this turnaround, first note that Nebraska finished 55th in total defense last season. Then realize that the Huskers returned nine players with starting experience and 25 letter-winners from a defense that allowed 23.9 points and 361.9 yards of offense per game in 2002.

Finally, consider that the Blackshirts lost three full-time starters from last year's unit and all three — defensive end Chris Kelsay (Buffalo) and cornerback DeJuan Groce and linebacker Scott Shanle (both St. Louis) — made NFL rosters.

While the quick rebound may have seemed improbable, members of Nebraska's defensive unit don't seem surprised. After a spring, fall camp and a few games, the Huskers will tell you that Pelini, whose resume includes nine years in the NFL as an assistant coach, is indeed the real deal.

"Everybody on the defense loves him," middle linebacker Barrett Ruud said. "He's not a yeller, but he gets you fired up. He gets you ready to play every game, and he's really a lot of fun to play for."

It seems the first thing Pelini did was restore confidence. That factor certainly can't be overlooked considering some disgruntled fans and other critics started mockingly referring to Nebraska's defense as the "Blackskirts" last season.

Pelini has built the defense back up with a focus on the fundamentals and by showing the Huskers they can stop teams while playing a base defense as long as every player executes their assignment correctly.

"We're a lot more confident," cornerback Fabian Washington said. "We feel we can go out and play with anybody now, and we know we have one of the best defenses, so we have a reason to be pretty confident."

The first hint that the defense might be improved came in the season opener when Nebraska beat Oklahoma State, perceived to possess a high-powered offense, 17-7. NU continued to dominate defensively, not allowing a second-half point in its first three contests.

"As we went through the Oklahoma State game, our confidence kept rising and rising," Ruud said. "It's continued to rise each game."

Pelini also has simplified the Huskers' scheme. This season, Ruud said the Blackshirts know their assignments inside and out, and the in-game adjustments are slight, rather than drastic. Nebraska is also taking on a more aggressive, attack-style approach, while mixing man-to-man and zone coverage in the secondary to help confuse opposing quarterbacks.

"I think we're just a lot more comfortable in our schemes, and we know how to play our techniques a lot better, and our coaches have taught us how to study tendencies pretty good," Ruud said. "When you combine that, you know how to get off blocks and you know what the guy behind you is going to do, it makes it a lot easier."

Another key to Nebraska's defensive success is its ability to create turnovers. Three games in, the Huskers had 10 takeaways — five fumble recoveries and five interceptions — nearly halfway to last season's total of 21 turnovers forced.

"It all comes back to our identity and the effort," Pelini said of creating turnovers. "Our guys are playing hard, and we're getting a lot of hats around the ball. When that happens, good things are going to happen.

"That's where we begin and end — with the effort and getting people around the football."

Added Ruud: "We have the mindset that we're trying to get the ball out. We're tackling the ball every play."

While Nebraska's defense is off to a solid start, Pelini isn't about to celebrate.

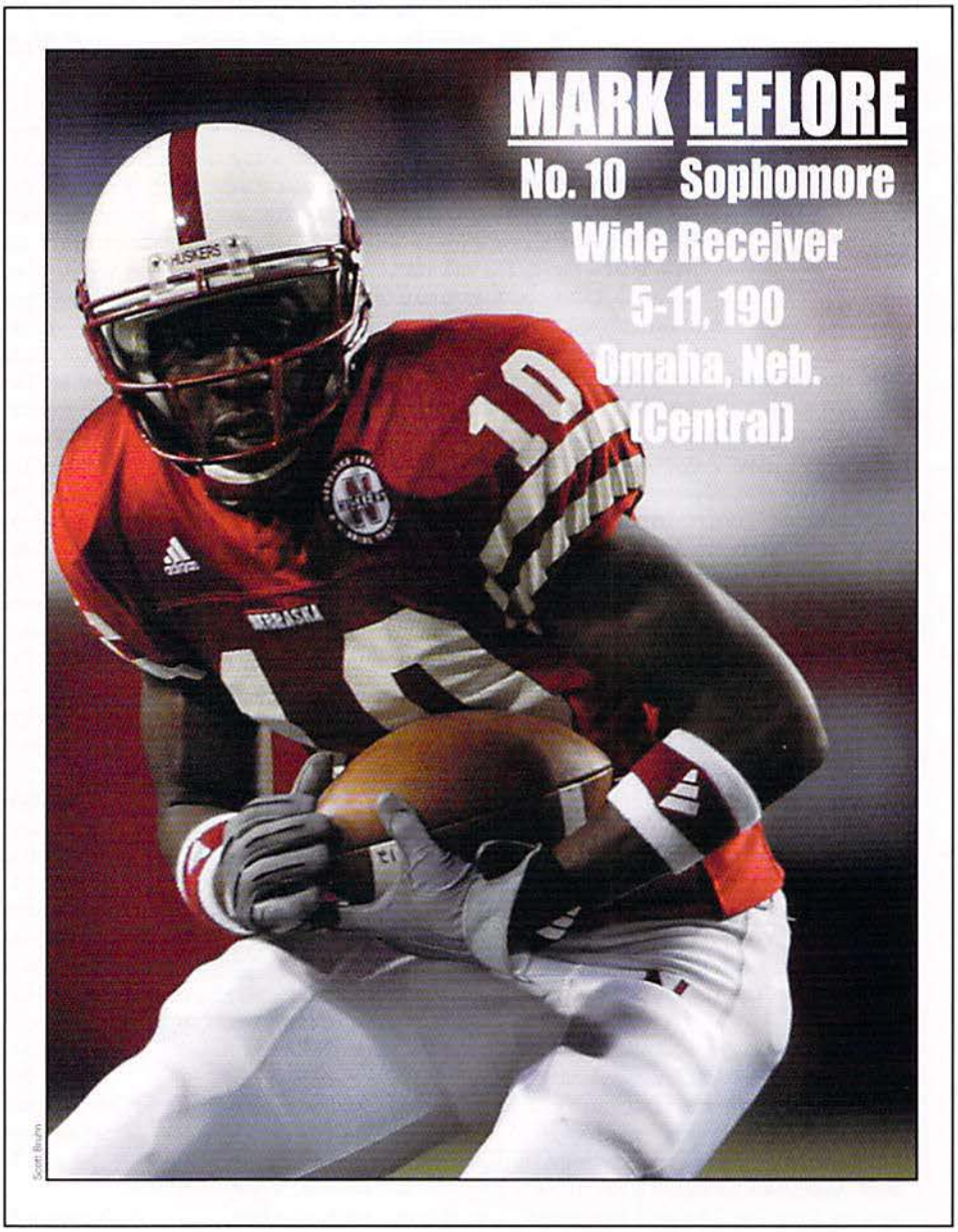
"We're still making some mistakes, but we're progressing," he said. "Like I always say, we're not the finished product, but our guys are making strides, and we're happy about that." ■

Terry Douglass *is the sports editor of the Grand Island Independent. He can be reached at tdbbdouglass@earthlink.net.*

PLAYER PROFILE

Playing Catch

Time spent with father helped direct LeFlore toward football



Not long ago, Mark LeFlore's parents found a videotape of him and his brother, Chris, playing basketball in a Hoop-It-Up tournament. David Horne is a teammate, and the team they are playing includes Barrett Ruud, Bo Ruud and Jake Muhleisen. They are all elementary-school age.

"My mom said, 'Hey, did you know you played these guys?' " LeFlore says.

Basketball was his sport back then. "That's where my heart was," Nebraska's sophomore wide receiver said. "I was always a Nebraska (football) fan, but never in a million years would I have picked football over basketball. It's just circumstances, fate, whatever you want to call it."

He didn't play organized football until his freshman year at Omaha, Neb., North High School, and only then because a friend didn't want to try out for the team by himself.

Even after LeFlore made the team as a quarterback, he preferred basketball. It wasn't until the summer following his sophomore year at Omaha Central — he transferred in the middle of his freshman year — that his athletic interest began to shift from basketball to football.

He was growing, getting stronger, and "it was just coming together for me," he says.

LeFlore had moved from quarterback to wide receiver at Central, and had been successful, playing on the varsity as a sophomore. That might seem surprising given the fact he had played only the one season at North.

But his pass-catching experience was considerably more extensive.

From an early age, he and his dad, Mark Sr., had played catch with a football. His dad always figured he would play football, and made it a point to teach him the skills of a receiver.

His dad also coached his youth-league basketball and soccer teams — he played soccer as a freshman at Central, "but no one knows that," he says with a smile. He played forward.

"My coach always told me, 'Just use your speed and kick the ball.' "

LeFlore describes himself as a born athlete. His dad "nurtured" that athleticism, and helped direct it toward football with the sessions playing catch with Mark and Chris. "He'd give me little tips, pointers," Mark says. "I look back on it and really thank him for that."

They would go out in the street in front of their home, and Mark, though usually thinking about basketball, would run slants and "sideline touches," catch passes high and low.

"My dad doesn't have that great of

an arm," says Mark. But in retrospect that was a plus. "He threw them over my head, at my knees. I was used to seeing every kind of pass, really."

LeFlore has never stopped playing catch. Last season, he and Horne occasionally played catch outside the dorm. Now he can play catch with his brother, a Cornhusker walk-on.

Having Chris, who aspires to play quarterback, at Nebraska is "pretty cool," Mark says. "It was weird being down here without him. I honestly don't remember life without him being there. We were at the same schools, always played on the same teams, and did a lot of the same stuff."

Both his parents have been supportive of him, his brother and his sister, he says.

His dad attends every game, going on the road with Horne's dad, Damond. "I don't think there's a game where he hasn't been there," says Mark. "He's always supporting me."

And the Cornhuskers. "He's just a die-hard Nebraska fan, whether I was playing or not."

Despite last season's struggles, "he was excited about the games," Mark says. "He was excited to see me play, excited to see David play, excited to see Jammal (Lord) play. He likes everybody."

His mom, Floretta, is similarly supportive, although she always envisioned him as a basketball player and "was a little upset that I decided to play football," he says.

She tells him "all the time" to thank his dad for spending time with him when he was young.

He doesn't need to be reminded anymore. "I'm grateful for the time he was able to spend with us," Mark says. "A lot of kids don't have dads (who do that). So I'm really grateful."

His dad saw to it that there was a basketball hoop on the garage, where he and his friends could play pick-up games and develop the skills to play in youth leagues and then at Central.

He was on the same team, though a younger age group, as Cornhusker teammate Titus Adams, with Horne — whom the other kids called "Michael Jordan" — playing on both teams.

His parents have the videotape to show his early development as a basketball player. "I probably should show it to Barrett; he might remember, or he might not," LeFlore says. "It was weird." ■

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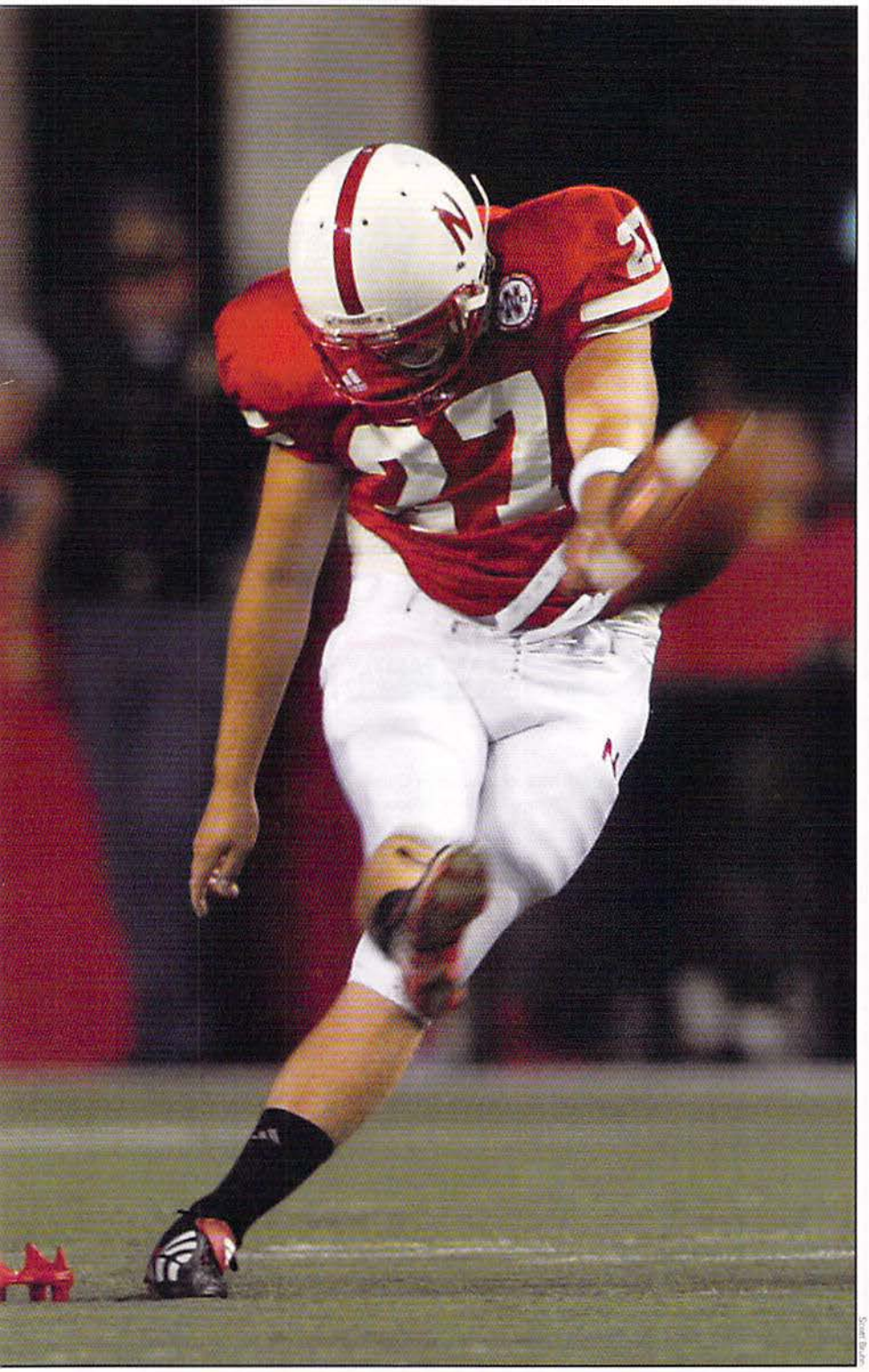


Place-kicker Davis Dyches got his opportunity after senior Dale Endorf suffered a season-ending knee injury.

Maturity, need usually determine who plays as true freshman

By Mike Babcock

A true freshman has to have physical and emotional maturity in order to play at Nebraska. But those qualities alone aren't enough. There also has to be a need — in most cases, anyway.

That's why Brandon Teamer is unique. Even though the Cornhuskers have experienced defensive tackles, he was among five true freshmen who played in the first three games.

Going into preseason practice, "we thought he'd be a wildcard," defensive line coach Jeff Jamrog said of Teamer. "If he could add to the position, it would be a bonus."

The 6-foot-5, 275-pound Teamer made an immediate impression with his athleticism, scoring the highest on the performance index in freshman testing on the first day of fall camp. And he continued to impress the coaches when he got on the field, during the early practices.

Teamer was so impressive, in fact, that following the only major scrimmage during the preseason, Coach Frank Solich announced that he would play without redshirting.

Typically, Solich, like Tom Osborne before him, has waited until the week of the first game to identify

tributors

Feature Story

the majority of true freshmen with a chance to play. But he didn't wait on Teamer.

"He is special," said Jamrog. "He's an excellent athlete."

The coaches knew he could be a pass rusher; they considered using him as a defensive end instead of a tackle. "We were curious as to how he was going to hold up in the run game," Jamrog said.

That curiosity was quickly satisfied. "His pad level is excellent, and he just continues to keep working on his footwork and reads," said Jamrog. "He's making progress every day."

So are the other freshmen from the 2003 recruiting class: wide receiver Andy Birkel, short-snapper Lane Kelly, quarterback Joe Dailey and place-kicker David Dyches.

Though Dailey has received the most attention, as a result of the position he plays, Dyches could well have the most significant impact among the newcomers, after shedding a potential redshirt in the second game against Utah State and responding by kicking four field goals in four attempts.

His opportunity came as a result of senior walk-on Dale Endorf's suffering a season-ending knee injury on his first kickoff and Sandro DeAngelis' missing an extra-point kick.

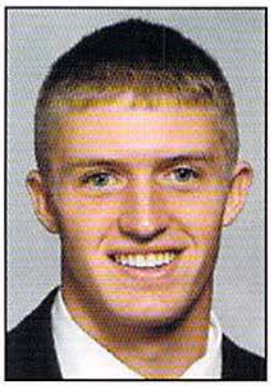
The injury to Endorf was "unfortunate," Dyches said following the Utah State game. "But I kept telling my parents that when I got my opportunity, I'd make the most of it."

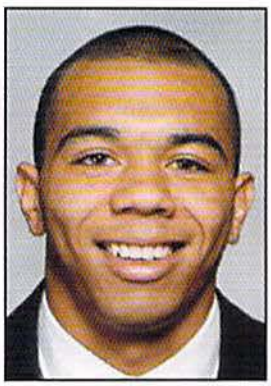
He certainly made the most of it, kicking four field goals in his second game as well.

Dyches, who isn't likely to be mistaken for anything other than a true freshman, was the last in the 2003

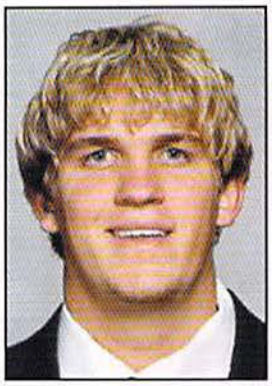
Scott Bruhn

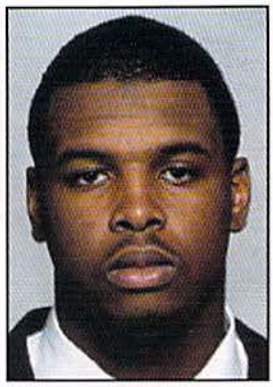
Freshman defensive tackle Brandon Teamer made an immediate impression with his athleticism.


Andy Birkel


Joe Dailey

David Dyches


Lane Kelly


Brandon Teamer

recruiting class to sign a letter of intent, doing so the day after everyone else signed.

Nebraska came in late, after he had already settled on national champion Ohio State. He was a Buckeye fan, despite graduating high school in Houston. But with junior All-America place-kicker Mike Nugent, Ohio State initially wanted him to wait a semester before enrolling.

So when the Cornhuskers offered, he accepted. He just wanted to kick somewhere, he said, the level of competition wasn't as important as having an opportunity to compete for a job.

Much was made of his four-field-goal debut, equaling the number of field goals he kicked during his entire senior season at Houston's Westfield High School. But he made 11 of 16 field goal attempts as a junior, and he kicked a 42-yard field goal in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.

Dailey, Birkel and Kelly, a walk-on, all have filled position needs, too.

That Dailey has avoided a redshirt is no surprise. Solich indicated early on that he would be given an opportunity to compete for playing time at quarterback, and not necessarily as just as a back-up to Jammal Lord. During his teleconference the week before the opening game, after officially announcing that Dailey would play, Solich was asked if Dailey would compete for the starting job.

"We are not ruling out anything," Solich replied.

"I like his attitude and approach to the game. He's all business, and that is what you want to have at quarterback. He is bright, but it's an awful lot to pick up in a very short period of time, when you talk about a freshman coming in and playing at the quarterback position. We'll see how it all works."

It worked well enough that the week before the Utah State game, Solich said Dailey had moved ahead of junior Mike Stuntz in competition for the top back-up job behind Lord.

Dailey's late-game debut was impressive. But he didn't play the next week against Penn State, not only because of how the game went but also because "Joe did not have a great week of practice. I know a lot of people want to see freshmen step in and look great every time," said Solich.

But practice is usually a good indicator of how someone will play, plus, "there's a big difference coming into a game when it's really on the line," as would have been the case.

Even so, "we do have confidence in him," Solich said of Dailey.

Nebraska's 2003 scholarship recruiting class included 17, counting Ronnie Smith, a wide receiver from Carson, Calif., who committed two days before letter-of-intent signing day in 2002 but delayed his enrollment until January of 2003, and Steve Craver, who ended up in junior college.

Four of the remaining 16 are playing and another, offensive lineman Ryan Schuler probably would have if not for a medical problem — reportedly blood clots — that forced him to redshirt.

In addition, four other scholarship recruits suited up for the early home games: guard Greg Austin, I-back Tierre Green, tight end J.B. Phillips and Buck linebacker Bo Ruud. That any of them would play now is unlikely, barring a rash of injuries or something else unforeseen, though I-back David Horne, one of five true freshmen who played last season, was held out of action until the sixth game.

On the second day of preseason practice, Teamer was made available for interviews and admitted that the tempo "overwhelmed" him a little bit. "The linebackers run faster than the running backs did (in high school), so you've definitely got to be on your horse," he said. "It happens so quick."

Barely three weeks later, he was on the field, during the first half of the Oklahoma State game. With the adrenaline rush of playing in front of 78,000 fans, "you get a little high feeling," he said.

At this point, Teamer said, his biggest asset is "youth. I play as hard as I can."

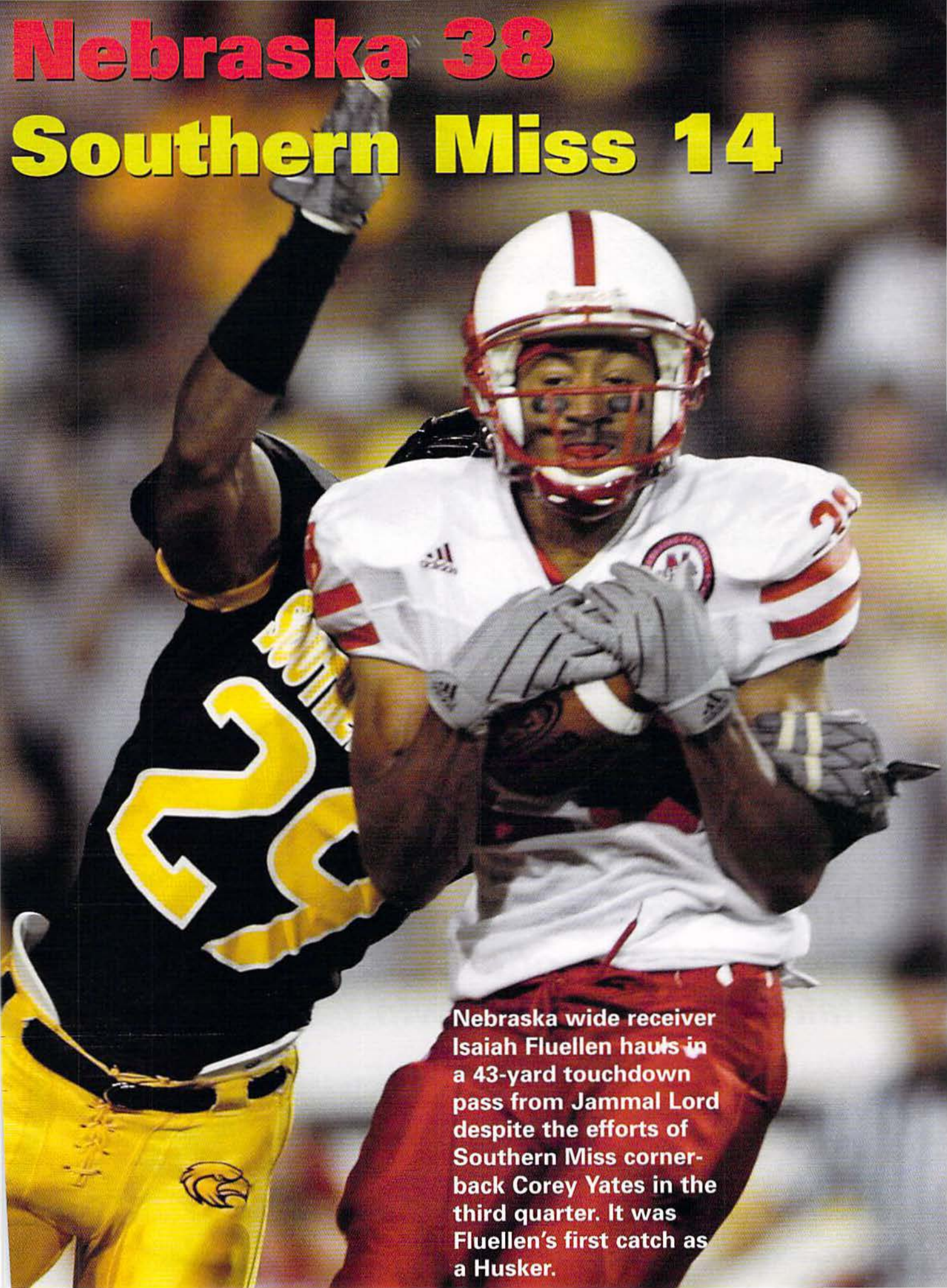
However, "you have to get in a zone, and I haven't really felt that zone I felt in high school yet," he said. "That's something to work for. In high school, you feel totally comfortable with your surroundings, what's going to happen and what you're going to go. It might take a while."

The Omaha Central graduate is getting on-the-job training. He spent the summer in Lincoln preparing for his first collegiate season. But he didn't aspire to playing without redshirting.

He would have been satisfied either way. "I just came out and tried to contribute in fall camp," he said. "I wasn't really thinking about myself. I was thinking about the team as a whole."

Spoken like a veteran. ■

Nebraska 38
Southern Miss 14



Nebraska wide receiver Isaiah Fluellen hauls in a 43-yard touchdown pass from Jammal Lord despite the efforts of Southern Miss cornerback Corey Yates in the third quarter. It was Fluellen's first catch as a Husker.

Jammal Lord (above) completed six of his 14 passes, with two going for touchdowns in a two-minute stretch of the third quarter. The defense hounded Southern Miss quarterback Dustin Almond, who finished just 4-of-24. He was sacked twice, one of them by NU cornerback Lornell McPherson (right) for an 11-yard loss in the second quarter.

A Little of

Huskers combine kicking game, defense, offense to take control in road win

GAME STORY

Despite jumping to a 17-0 lead midway through the first quarter, Nebraska seemed to have lost its edge as it left the field in Hattiesburg, Miss., at halftime.

Southern Mississippi went to the locker room on the emotional high of a touchdown late in the second quarter, set up by Marvin Young's 37-yard punt return. The Golden Eagles had drawn the largest home crowd in school history, an announced 36,125, back into the game.

After the fast start, accomplished with a fumble recovery and pass interception, "I feel like we laid down a little bit," Nebraska weakside linebacker Demorrio Williams said.

"We were acting like 17 points was enough, and it wasn't," said Cornhusker cornerback Fabian Washington. (Actually, 17 points were enough. The final score was 38-14.)

But a key sequence involving all three aspects — kicking, defense and offense — early in the second half proved to be critical in Nebraska's fourth consecutive victory and first on the road.

Everything

The sequence began with Kyle Larson's 49-yard punt, which was downed at the Southern Miss 3-yard line. Then the defense dropped the Golden Eagles for a net loss of 2 yards, forcing them to punt, a 56-yarder that Josh Davis returned 13 yards. And then the offense did its thing.

Well, not exactly if you consider Nebraska's thing is running the ball. But with Southern Miss expecting a run, and having that expectation confirmed by play action, quarterback Jammal Lord pulled up and tossed the ball to wide receiver Ross Pilkington, who completed the 44-yard scoring play.

That gave the Cornhuskers some breathing room. And then on the third play of their next possession, Lord did essentially the same thing, except that the pass didn't come off play action.

"The coaches called a post play, that's all," wide receiver Isaiah Fluellen said, as if his 43-yard touchdown reception to increase the lead to 24 points was as simple as he made it look.

You remember Fluellen. Or maybe you don't. The redshirted freshman from Ramstein, Germany, was playing in only his second game at Nebraska, after being hampered by a hamstring injury.

He practiced well during the off-week following the Penn State game, and provided further evidence of what is becoming apparent, that Nebraska might have a few more tricks up its sleeve.

Put another way, the tendencies the Cornhuskers showed on offense

By Mike Babcock
Photos by Derek Lippincott

Although Southern Mississippi built up some numbers against Nebraska's reserves late in the game, the top unit had another outstanding Southern Miss running back Tim Blackwell (left). Williams finished with 12 tackles, including one sack, and recovered a fumble. Defensive including linebacker Chad Sievers (54).

the first three games were hardly reflected in their play against a Southern Miss team that had invested a good deal of emotion in preparation for their visit to M.M Roberts Stadium, televised nationally by the ESPN cable network.

Nebraska didn't run the ball well, 141 yards on 45 carries. It didn't dominate in time of possession; Southern Miss had a slight advantage, in fact. And it completed less than half its passes.

But no one could claim that Lord wasn't efficient with his six completions. And he almost had another long strike, which tight end Matt Herian got his hands on but couldn't hold.

Bottom line, Lord's 6-for-14 passing looked pretty good, as did his 6-yard touchdown run to open the scoring after Ryon Bingham's fumble recovery just over 3 minutes into the game.

Lord finished with a 6-yard rushing net, on 18 carries. That was very un-Lord-like, but it reflected, in part, good decision-making against an aggressive defense built around the blitz.

The Golden Eagles "come a lot and they come from a lot of different alignments," Coach Frank Solich said afterward, repeating the theme of offensive coordinator Barney Cotton's remarks in the days preceding the game. "They're going to make you look bad on a fair number of plays."

That, in turn, made Nebraska's statistics look mediocre, if not bad.

But only one number mattered. "Going in, we were not all about statistics, except for the scoreboard statistic, and also trying to make big plays on both sides of the ball," said Solich.

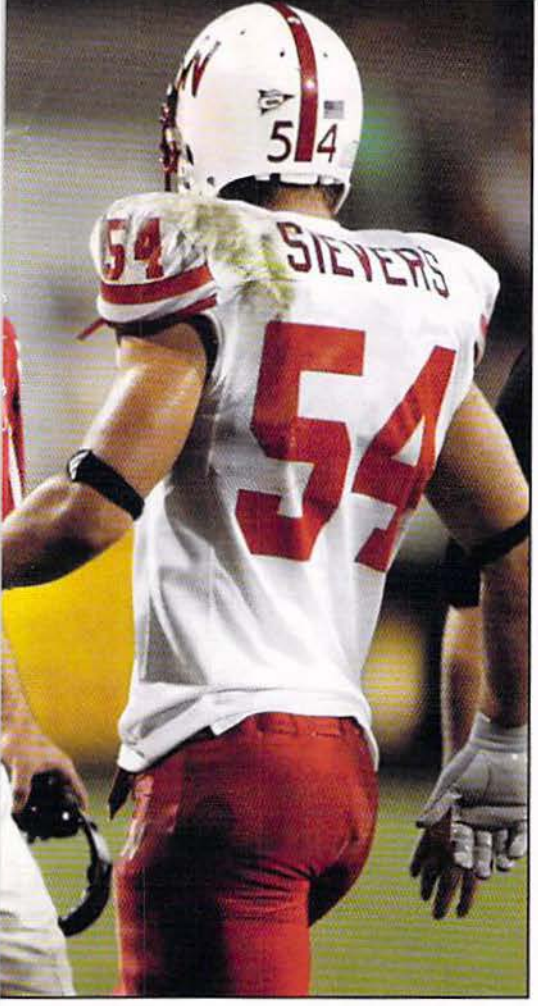
The defense did its part, a tendency that held true to form, forcing five turnovers, beginning with Bingham's early fumble recovery and including fumble recoveries by Barrett Ruud and Demorrio Williams as well as pass interceptions by Josh Bullocks and Jerrell Pippens.

Nebraska converted three of the turnovers into 21 points and the other two thwarted Golden Eagle scoring opportunities. Except for the points, of course, Southern Miss won the statistical battle, gaining 319 yards against a Cornhusker defense that went into the game ranked No. 1 nationally.

Nebraska had allowed averages of only 208 yards and eight points in three games.

The Golden Eagles' yardage total was largely cosmetic, however: 175 of their yards came during the fourth quarter, as Nebraska began making wholesale substitutions.

Even so, the final Southern Miss touchdown, with 2:43 remaining in the game, didn't set well with Cornhusker defensive end Benard Thomas. "We have the mindset that we don't want anyone to score any points on us at any time," he said. "We've got confidence. We've got the No. 1 defense right now. We know it, and we want to stay there, so we come to play, and we come to play



game. NU linebacker Demorrio Williams tackles
oordinator Bo Pelini (right) encourages his charges,

every day."

Still, "when your opportunities come, you have to make plays," Solich said.

And Nebraska did. If it hadn't, the expectations that caused Southern Miss to bring in 3,000 bleacher seats to temporarily increase its stadium capacity might have been realized.

The fast start alone might not have been enough. Lord's third-quarter touchdown passes "allowed us to separate some," said Solich. They provided a lead, some breathing room "that you never just felt completely comfortable with. But we were able to at least get some cushion there."

And with them, Nebraska regained its edge.

"There were an awful lot of things that happened at the start of the third quarter that ended up being pretty critical as to how this game turned out," Solich said.

None more so than that early sequence: kicking game, defense and offense. ■

GAME NOTES

Notes And Quotes From The Southern Miss Game

MATURITY BEYOND HIS YEARS

Freshman quarterback Joe Dailey played one first-half series, entering the game with 12:10 remaining in the second quarter. The six-play series began with a mishandled center snap and ended with a pass interception. "I guess I just threw it a little too high," said Dailey.

The ball was deflected before being intercepted.

The pre-game plan was to use Dailey in the first half, according to offensive coordinator Barney Cotton. "It's a learning process for a young quarterback," Cotton said. "We put him in the game with the game still on the line. Jammal (Lord) knew that we had that in the back of our minds.

"That's good we're able to do that, and we might be able to continue it in the future."

Dailey also got to play at game's end. "The more snaps he gets, the more comfortable he's going to get out there and we feel good about him," said Cotton. "Regardless of how it works out this fall, we want to go into next season with a quarterback with some experience."

Dailey's initial series might not have been impressive, but the maturity he showed during a post-game interview was. "There's no pressure at all," he said.

"I understand what my job is. My job is to relieve Jammal if anything goes wrong. If the coaches want me to be in, then whatever they see fit is what goes for me."

Dailey, a fan favorite at Memorial Stadium, said Cornhusker fans ought to be chanting Lord's name rather than his "because it's hard when you're the starter and your home crowd is chanting the backup's name. It's not right, and I don't really appreciate that from them," he said.

"I hope that they understand Jammal is the man and that he did what he had to do (against Southern Mississippi). Hopefully, he proved his worth and we continue to get better together."

Those are the words of a true freshman, remember.

BRING 'EM ON

The Southern Mississippi student section was located on the Nebraska sideline, and not far behind the players. The abuse went beyond words, according to defensive end Benard Thomas, who was pelted with coins and beer, among other things. But "I love it," he said. "Bring on the crowd. Bring it on. The louder they yell, the harder we play."

The stands at M.M. Roberts Stadium are extremely close to the sideline, comparable to the stadiums in the Big 12 at Oklahoma State and Colorado. "But as far as the beer-throwing and things going on like that, they're (Southern Miss students) up there," said Thomas.

TOP 10 MATERIAL

Nebraska went into the game ranked No. 11 by the coaches and No. 15 by the Associated Press. But "we deserve a Top 10 ranking," said free safety Josh Bullocks.

I-back Josh Davis agreed. "We think so," he said.

LEADING RUSHER

Senior Robin Miller, the No. 4 I-back, was the Cornhuskers' leading rusher with 47 yards on two carries. And he was tackled for no gain on one of the carries.

The other was a 47-yard touchdown run.

His touchdown run was among three plays of 40 yards or more, the others being Jammal Lord's touchdown passes of 44 and 43 yards, to Ross Pilkington and Isaiah Fluellen.

"We just wanted to make some big plays, in the passing game or running game," assistant head coach and quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said.

PASSING SUCCESS

Even though Lord completed only 6-of-14 passes, he was very productive, with the two long touchdowns and another potential touchdown, to tight end Matt Herian.

"We didn't go into the game with the idea of a certain number of throws or a certain number of throws in the first quarter or the first half or at the end of the game, but it was obvious to us that we wanted to get the passing game going," Solich said. "We were committed to throwing more and trying to throw on maybe some earlier downs, too. That worked fairly well for us at times."

Lord's touchdown passes came on first-and-10 and third-and-9.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior walk-on Fred Thorne was Nebraska's special-teams captain. Thorne is a "bullet" on the punt coverage team. Punter Kyle Larson averaged a season-high 47.6 yards on seven punts, including three that pinned Southern Mississippi inside its own 20-yard line. Larson had punts of 67 and 63 yards.

"I think he had a very good day," Solich said of Larson. "There were a couple that he was just a little off on turning them into his usual kicks that are very high and very deep."

On balance, however, "Kyle was doing an excellent job." ■

Scouting Report

2003 Schedule

1	Aug. 30	Oklahoma St. (3-1), W 17-7	1-0
2	Sept. 6	Utah State (1-3), W 31-7	2-0
3	Sept. 13	Penn State (2-3), W 18-10	3-0
4	Sept. 25	@ Southern Miss (2-2) W. 38-14	4-0
5	Oct. 4	Troy State (3-2), 12:30 p.m.	
6	Oct. 11	@ Missouri (4-1), TBA	
7	Oct. 18	Texas A&M (2-2), TBA (Homecoming)	
8	Oct. 25	Iowa State (2-2), TBA	
9	Nov. 1	@ Texas (3-1), TBA	
10	Nov. 8	@ Kansas (4-1), TBA	
11	Nov. 15	Kansas State (4-1), TBA	
12	Nov. 28	@ Colorado (2-2), 11 a.m., ABC	
	Dec. 7	Big 12 Championship at Kansas City, Mo., 7 p.m.	

Upcoming Opponents' Schedules

Troy State (3-2)

Aug. 30	@ Kansas State, L 41-5
Sept. 6	@ Minnesota, L 48-7
Sept. 13	@ Ala.-Birmingham, W 20-9
Sept. 20	SE Louisiana, W 28-0
Sept. 27	Marshall, W 33-24
Oct. 4	@ Nebraska
Oct. 18	Florida International
Oct. 25	@ Virginia
Nov. 1	@ North Texas
Nov. 8	@ Middle Tennessee St.
Nov. 15	@ Utah State
Nov. 22	Louisiana-Monroe

Missouri (4-1)

Aug. 30	Illinois (@ St. Louis), W 22-15
Sept. 6	@ Ball State, W 35-7
Sept. 13	Eastern Illinois, W 37-0
Sept. 20	Middle Tennessee, W 41-40, ot
Sept. 27	@ Kansas, L 35-14
Oct. 11	Nebraska
Oct. 18	@ Oklahoma
Oct. 25	Texas Tech
Nov. 1	Iowa State
Nov. 8	@ Colorado
Nov. 15	Texas A&M
Nov. 22	@ Kansas State

Big 12 At A Glance

Thursday, Sept. 18

Virginia Tech 35, Texas A&M 19

Saturday, Sept. 20

Missouri 41, Middle Tennessee 40 (ot)
Baylor 27, Sam Houston State 6
Kansas 41, Jacksonville State 6
Florida State 47, Colorado 7
Oklahoma State 52, SMU 6
Marshall 27, Kansas State 20
Oklahoma 59, UCLA 24
Texas 48, Rice 7
North Carolina State 49, Texas Tech 21

Thursday, Sept. 25

Nebraska 38, Southern Mississippi 14

Saturday, Sept. 20

Kansas 35, Missouri 14
Northern Illinois 24, Iowa State 16
Texas 63, Tulane 18
Pittsburgh 37, Texas A&M 26
Texas Tech 49, Mississippi 45

Saturday, Oct. 4

Colorado at Baylor
Oklahoma at Iowa State
UL Lafayette at Oklahoma State
Kansas State at Texas
Texas A&M at Texas Tech
Troy State at Nebraska

Game 5

Troy State
Oct. 4

Location: Troy, Ala.
Enrollment: 6,630
2003 record: 3-2
Coach: Larry Blakeney, 13th year
Series: Nebraska leads 2-0

12:30 p.m. CDT
Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.

Trojan to Watch

Junior free safety Derrick Ansley has five interceptions and also leads the team with 36 tackles and six pass breakups. He had two interceptions in the fourth quarter of the win over Marshall, the first he returned 70 yards for a touchdown. Ansley was the No. 2 tackler last season with 82, including 13 against Nebraska.

Quick Facts

Troy State was outscored 89-12 in losing its first two games to Kansas State and Minnesota but has won three straight, including a 33-24 victory over Marshall, which defeated Kansas State a week earlier.

"We've played an awfully tough schedule and dealt with it," Coach Larry Blakeney said. "K-State beat us handily. Marshall beat K-State. We beat Marshall. That shows how much we have improved."

The Trojans' 3-2 start is the team's best since moving to Division I-A in 2001.

DeWhitt Betterson, who had been sidelined by a shoulder injury, rushed for 114 yards and a touchdown against Marshall. His 52-yard run in the third quarter was Troy State's longest of the season and matched Betterson's career long.

On Deck

At Missouri
Oct. 11

Location: Columbia, Mo.
Enrollment: 24,847
2003 record: 4-1
Coach: Gary Pinkel, 3rd year
Series: Nebraska leads 61-32-3

Time: TBA
Memorial Stadium, Columbia, Mo.

Tentative 2-Deeps

Nebraska Offense

WR	X	2	Ross Pilkington*	6-0	190	So.
		28	Isaiah Fluellen	6-0	180	RFr.
LT		51	Richie Incognito*	6-3	300	So.
		69	Nick Povendo*	6-3	300	Jr.
LG		78	Mike Erickson**	6-4	305	Jr.
		72	Tim Green	6-4	325	Sr.
C		79	Josh Sewell*	6-2	300	Sr.
		64	Kurt Mann	6-3	290	RFr.
RG		71	Jake Andersen*	6-1	300	Jr.
		75	Brandon Koch	6-3	310	So.
RT		68	Dan Vili Waldrop***	6-5	350	Sr.
		68	Darren DeLone	6-5	320	Jr.
TE	Y	11	Matt Herian*	6-5	240	So.
		82	Phil Peetz**	6-2	270	Sr.
QB		5	Jammal Lord***	6-2	220	Sr.
		12	Joe Dailey	6-0	200	Fr.
FB		4	Judd Davies***	6-0	250	Sr.
		45	Steve Kriewald**	5-10	250	Jr.
IB		1	Josh Davis**	5-11	205	Sr.
		9	David Horne*	6-0	200	So.
WR	Z	10	Mark LeFlore*	5-11	185	So.
		13	Tim Liley*	6-2	205	Sr.
PK		27	David Dyches	6-1	190	Fr.

Nebraska Defense

LDE	5	Benard Thomas**	6-4	265	Jr.
	96	Titus Adams*	6-3	290	So.
NT	59	Ryon Bingham**	6-3	290	Sr.
	94	Patrick Kabongo***	6-6	320	Sr.
DT	66	Le Kevin Smith*	6-2	305	So.
	74	Brandon Teamer	6-5	270	Fr.
RDE	88	Trevor Johnson***	6-4	255	Sr.
	90	Adam Carriker	6-6	260	RFr.
BLB	2	T.J. Hollowell***	6-0	230	Sr.
	11	Ira Cooper**	6-2	230	Jr.
MLB	38	Barrett Ruud*	6-2	240	Jr.
	54	Chad Sievers*	6-3	230	Jr.
WLB	7	Demorrio Williams	6-1	210	Sr.
	39	Chad Buller*	5-11	215	Sr.
LCB	3	Fabian Washington*	5-11	175	So.
	4	Terrell Butler*	5-10	190	Sr.
FS	20	Josh Bullocks*	6-1	195	So.
	31	Jerrell Pippens***	6-2	195	Sr.
SS	21	Philip Bland**	5-11	205	Jr.
or	14	Daniel Bullocks*	6-1	200	So.
RCB	28	Pat Ricketts***	5-11	180	Sr.
or	1	Lornell McPherson**	5-9	175	Jr.
P	19	Kyle Larson**	6-0	205	Sr.

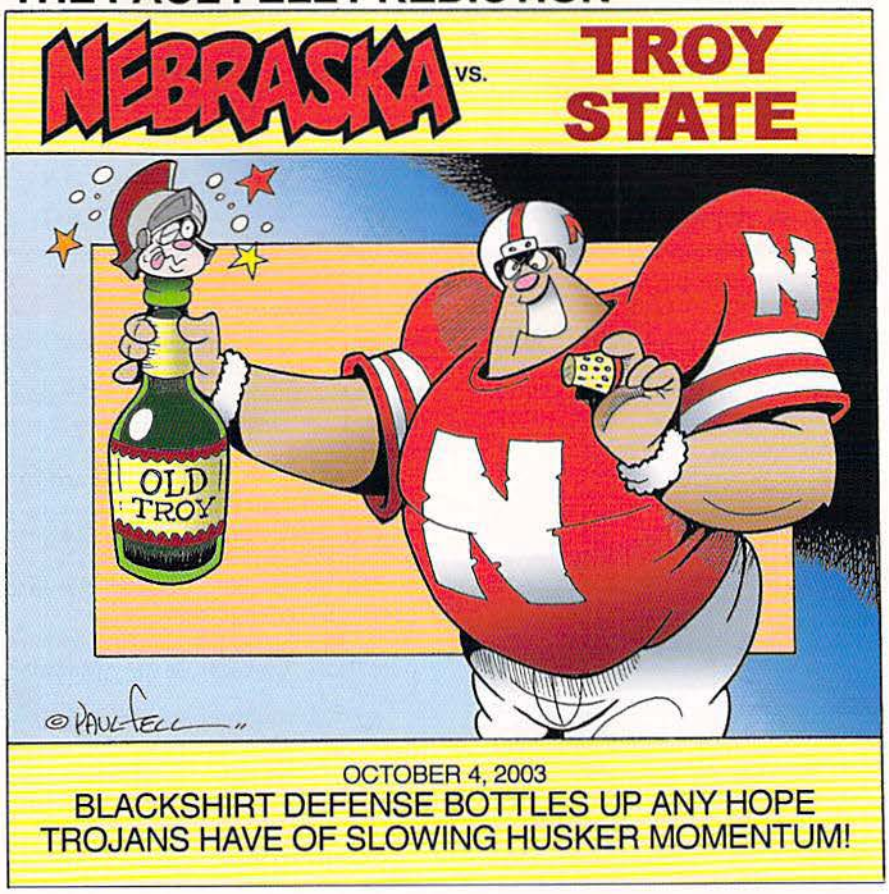
Troy State Offense

SE	Z	5	Jason Samples**	6-0	196	Jr.
		80	Zsan Robinson	6-1	191	RFr.
LT		60	Henry Tellis**	6-5	309	Jr.
		53	Kenny Griffin	6-3	302	RFr.
LG		79	Junior Louissaint	6-1	277	Jr.
		66	Brandon McCloud	6-3	310	So.
C		59	Lee Milliner*	6-3	275	Jr.
		72	James Gardner	6-3	308	Fr.
RG		70	Donnie Bostian*	6-6	321	Jr.
		69	Kirbie Bodiford	6-4	279	RFr.
RT		76	Branden Hall**	6-3	329	Sr.
		73	James Edwards*	6-5	297	So.
TE	Y	13	Adrian Moore***	6-1	237	Sr.
		44	Jordan Lesley**	6-2	238	Jr.
QB		7	Aaron Leak	6-3	220	Jr.
		18	Hansell Bearden**	6-2	202	Jr.
TB		9	DeWhitt Betterson**	6-0	218	Jr.
		19	Jermaine Richardson	6-0	190	Fr.
FB		6	Chris Cox***	5-8	210	Sr.
		33	Sean Dawkins	5-10	225	Fr.
FL	X	4	Toris Rutledge*	6-0	187	So.
or		2	Bryant Stewart	5-11	204	Jr.
PK		20	Thomas Olmstead*	6-3	218	So.

Troy State Defense

LE	86	Cedric Phillips***	6-3	254	Sr.
	92	Jamaal Holt*	6-1	258	Jr.
NT	91	Torre Lankfort*	6-1	276	So.
	77	Franklin Lloyd	5-10	302	So.
DT	78	Eric Thomas**	6-0	289	Jr.
	90	David Tramble*	6-4	271	So.
RE	94	Demarcus Ware**	6-4	224	Jr.
	99	Cedric Sullivan	6-3	237	Jr.
SLB	42	Robby Farmer**	6-1	227	Jr.
	11	Torrence Smith	6-0	226	RFr.
MLB	30	Leverne Johnson*	6-0	232	So.
	35	Keith Staple*	6-0	222	So.
WLB	27	Bernard Davis*	6-1	215	So.
	26	Neal Oates***	6-0	215	Sr.
LCB	24	Freeman White**	5-10	167	Jr.
	34	Jermaine Miller*	6-0	165	So.
FS	10	Derrick Ansley**	6-1	171	Jr.
	28	Brannon Condren	6-1	191	RFr.
SS	16	Rayshun Reed***	5-10	182	Sr.
	32	Arthur Adams**	5-9	212	Jr.
RCB	8	Johnny Faulk*	5-10	167	So.
	3	Adrian Ghent*	5-10	175	So.
P	20	Thomas Olmstead*	6-3	218	So.

The Paul Fell Prediction



OCTOBER 4, 2003

BLACKSHIRT DEFENSE BOTTLES UP ANY HOPE TROJANS HAVE OF SLOWING HUSKER MOMENTUM!

Picks

Troy State At Nebraska

Brian Hill
Editor

This might be more of a test than earlier thought. The Trojans have won three straight, the most recent a 33-24 victory over Marshall, which upset Kansas State the previous week. But this year's Huskers appear to be a focused group that won't look past anyone. Nebraska should get the chance to continue to work on its passing game, smooth out the rough edges in other areas and get the backups more experience heading into the meat of the Big 12 schedule. **Nebraska 48, Troy State 13**

Mike Babcock
Contributing Editor

With all due respect to Troy State, this game will give Nebraska a final opportunity to give young players experience before conference play begins in earnest. Expect to see some less familiar faces during the second half. **Nebraska 38, Troy State 3**

Terry Douglass
Grand Island Independent
Sports Editor

Since moving up to the Division I ranks a few years ago, Troy State has done a respectable job while taking on some of the nation's top programs. However, this year's Trojan team doesn't appear to have enough talent to challenge Nebraska for very long on the Huskers' home field. **Nebraska 38, Troy State 7**

Game Stats

Nebraska Vs. Southern Miss

Sept. 25, 2003 • M.M. Roberts Stadium • Hattiesburg, Miss.

Score By Quarters

Nebraska	**17**	**0**	**14**	**7**	**—**	**38**
Southern Miss	**0**	**7**	**0**	**7**	**—**	**14**

Team Stats

	NU	SM
First Downs	11	19
Rushing	6	7
Passing	3	11
Penalty	2	1
Rushing Attempts	45	36
Yards Gained Rushing	191	133
Yards Lost Rushing	50	25
Net Yards Rushing	141	108
Net Yards Passing	124	211
Passes Attempted	15	42
Passes Completed	6	18
Had Intercepted	1	2
Total Plays	60	78
Total Net Yards	265	319
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.4	4.1
Fumbles-Lost	2-0	3-3
Penalties-Yards	9-50	9-66
Punts-Yards	7-333	7-292
Avg. Per Punt	47.6	41.7
Punt Returns-Yards	4-42	3-49
Interceptions-Yards	2-41	1-16
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	2-59	5-112
Possession Time	28:49	31:11

Scoring

NU — Jammal Lord 6-yard run (David Dyches kick)

NU — Dyches 40-yard field goal

NU — David Horne 3-yard run (Dyches kick)

USM — Tim Blackwell 1-yard run (Darren McCaleb kick)

NU — Ross Pilkington 44-yard pass from Lord (Dyches kick)

NU — Isaiah Fluellen 43-yard pass from Lord (Dyches kick)

USM — Caleb Hendrix 6-yard pass from Damion Carter (McCaleb kick)

NU — Robin Miller 47-yard run (Dyches kick)

Att. — 36,125

Weather — fair, humidity 61 percent

Temp. — 85

Derek Lippincott

NU I-back Josh Davis is chased by Southern Miss linebacker Michael Boley.

Individual Statistics

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Miller, R.	2	47	23.5	47	1
Davis, J.	10	46	4.6	23	0
Horne, D.	6	31	5.2	20	1
Ross, C.	6	25	4.2	10	0
Lord, J.	18	6	0.3	9	1
Kriewald, S.	1	2	2.0	2	0
Dailey, J.	1	-3	-3.0	0	0
Team	1	-9	-9.0	0	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	6-14-0	42.9	124	2
Dailey, J.	0-1-1	00.0	0	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Pilkington, R.	3	56	18.7	44	1
Fluellen, I.	1	43	43.0	43	1
Herian, M.	1	20	20.0	20	0
Horne, D.	1	5	5.0	5	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	7	333	47.6	67

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	4	42	10.5	15	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	2	59	29.5	40	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	Att.	Good	Long
Dyches, D.	1	1	40

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Williams, D.	8	4	12	2-4	0	1-3
Ruud, B.	4	6	10	0	0	0
Sievers, C.	4	4	8	0	0	0
Hollowell, T.	5	2	7	0	0	0
Thomas, B.	3	4	7	1-2	0	0
Bullocks, D.	3	2	5	0	0	0
McPherson, L.	3	1	4	1-11	0	1-11
Pippens, J.	1	3	4	1-2	1-0	0
Ricketts, P.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Cooper, I.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Buller, C.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Bingham, R.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Bradley, S.	1	2	3	1-1	0	0
Bullocks, J.	1	2	3	0	1-41	0
Johnson, T.	0	3	3	1-0	0	0
Amos, W.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Washington, F.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Adams, T.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Kabongo, P.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Butler, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
DeAngelis, S.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Brungardt, M.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Incognito, R.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Pilkington, R.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Shanle, A.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Keiser, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Siegel, S.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Thorne, F.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Teamer, B.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Huston, K.	0	1	1	0	0	0

SOUTHERN MISS

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Blackwell, T.	10	47	4.7	17	1
Walley, J.	7	27	3.9	8	0
Almond, D.	12	23	1.9	7	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Almond, D.	4-24-2	16.7	68	0
Carter, D.	14-17-0	82.4	143	1

RECEIVING LEADERS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Johnson, K.	4	41	10.2	15	0
Causey, P.	3	49	16.3	30	0
Lawrence, D.	3	38	12.7	21	0
Hendrix, C.	3	28	9.3	14	1
Courington, A.	2	34	17.0	28	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Johnson, L.	7	292	41.7	56

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Young, M.	3	49	16.3	37	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Eubanks, J.	2	49	24.5	25	0
Faulk, J.	2	48	24.0	33	0

DEFENSE LEADERS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Cash, A.	5	3	8	0	0	0
Boley, M.	4	4	8	2-5	0	1-4
Davis, R.	3	5	8	3-4	0	0
Pruitt, E.	4	3	7	1-2	0	0
Yates, C.	1	4	5	0	1-16	0
Ray, A.	0	4	4	0	0	0

2003 Season Stats

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Davis, J.	4	76	379	94.8	0
Lord, J.	4	76	268	67.0	3
Horne, D.	4	45	194	48.5	2
Miller, R.	3	2	47	15.7	1
Ross, C.	4	14	47	11.8	0
Dailey, J.	2	10	44	22.0	0
Davies, J.	4	14	36	9.0	2
LeFlore, M.	4	1	21	5.2	0
Kriewald, S.	4	2	2	1.0	0

PASSING

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	4	26-48-2	54.2	347	2
Dailey, J.	2	4-6-1	66.7	47	0

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPG	TD
Pilkington, R.	4	11	155	14.1	38.8	1
Herian, M.	4	9	136	15.1	34.0	0
LeFlore, M.	4	3	27	9.0	6.8	0
Davis, J.	4	2	19	9.5	4.8	0
Davies, J.	4	2	4	2.0	1.0	0
Fluellen, I.	2	1	43	43.0	21.5	1
Horne, D.	4	1	5	5.0	1.2	0
Liley, T.	4	1	5	5.0	1.2	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Dyches, D.	3	10	9	41
DeAngelis, S.	4	3	1	28

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG	I20
Larson, K.	17	7-9	41.7	67	8

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	16	174	10.9	30	0
Ross, C.	1	14	14.0	15	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	4	111	30.2	40	0
Sievers, C.	1	8	8.0	8	0

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

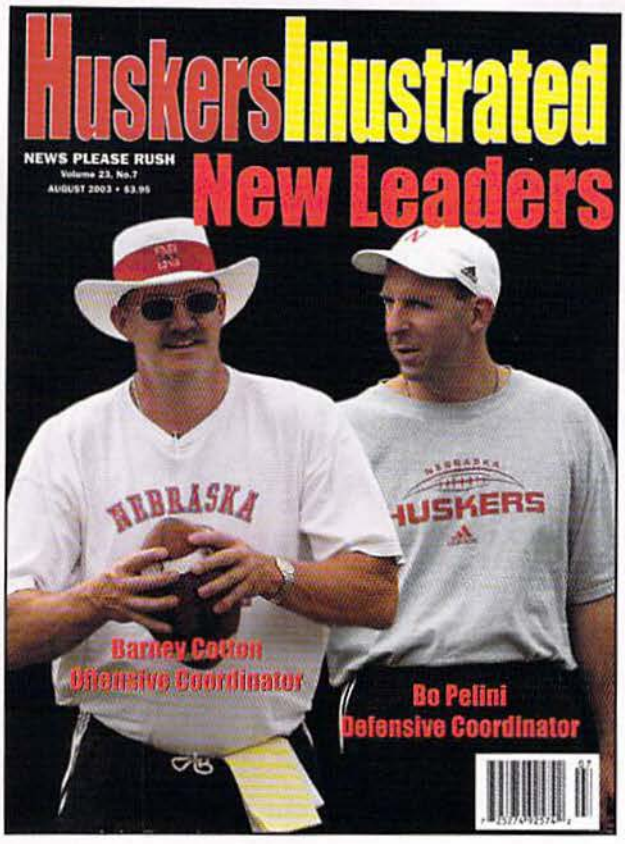
Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Ruud, B.	4	13	23	36	1-1	0	0
Williams, D.	4	24	11	35	6-34	0	4-30
Washington, F.	4	17	10	27	2-3	1-0	0
Hollowell, T.	4	14	8	22	1-10	0	1-10
Thomas, B.	4	6	8	14	1-2	0	0
Johnson, T.	4	5	9	14	2-1	0	0
Bullocks, J.	4	4	9	13	0	4-41	0
Pippens, J.	4	7	6	13	2-9	0	1-7

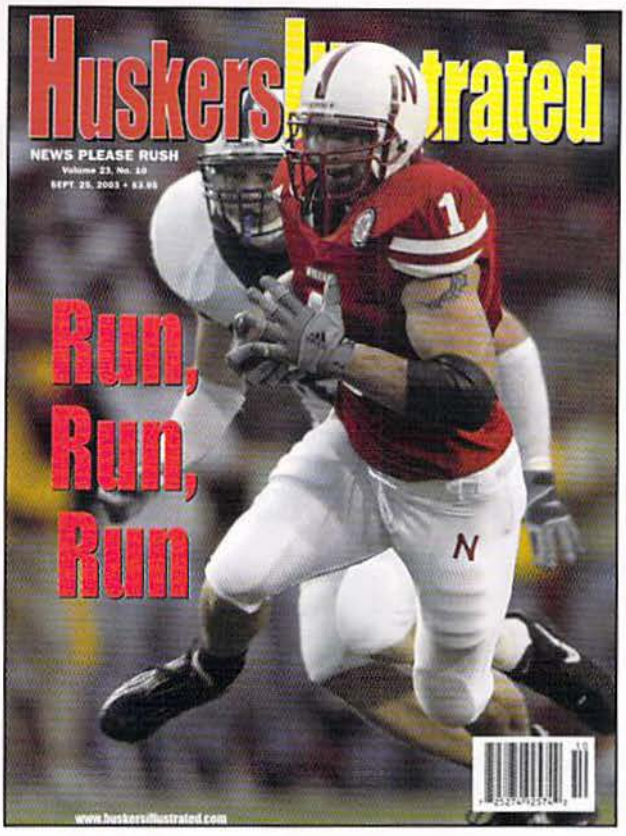
TEAM STATISTICS

	NU	OPP
Total Offensive Yards	1,413	943
Plays	300	248
Average Per Play	4.7	3.8
Average Per Game	353.2	235.8
Net Rushing Yards	1,019	298
Attempts	246	110
TDs Rushing	8	2
Net Passing Yards	394	645
Completions	30	64
Average Per Pass	7.3	4.7
Average Per Catch	13.1	10.1
Average Per Game	98.5	161.2
TDs Passing	2	3
Sacks By-Yards	7-58	5-25
Fumbles-Lost	11-4	11-8
Penalties-Yards	30-222	24-167

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	29	15	47	13	0	104
Opponents	14	17	0	7	0	38

All Huskers . . .





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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Different View

Former Husker QB Blakeman sees different side of game as Big 12 official

By Mike Babcock

The Nebraska football team had made a rest stop on the bus ride to Lawrence, Kan., where it would play Kansas the next day, in mid-November of 1986. As Clete Blakeman walked to the front of the bus, Coach Tom Osborne asked him to sit down for a second; he wanted to talk.

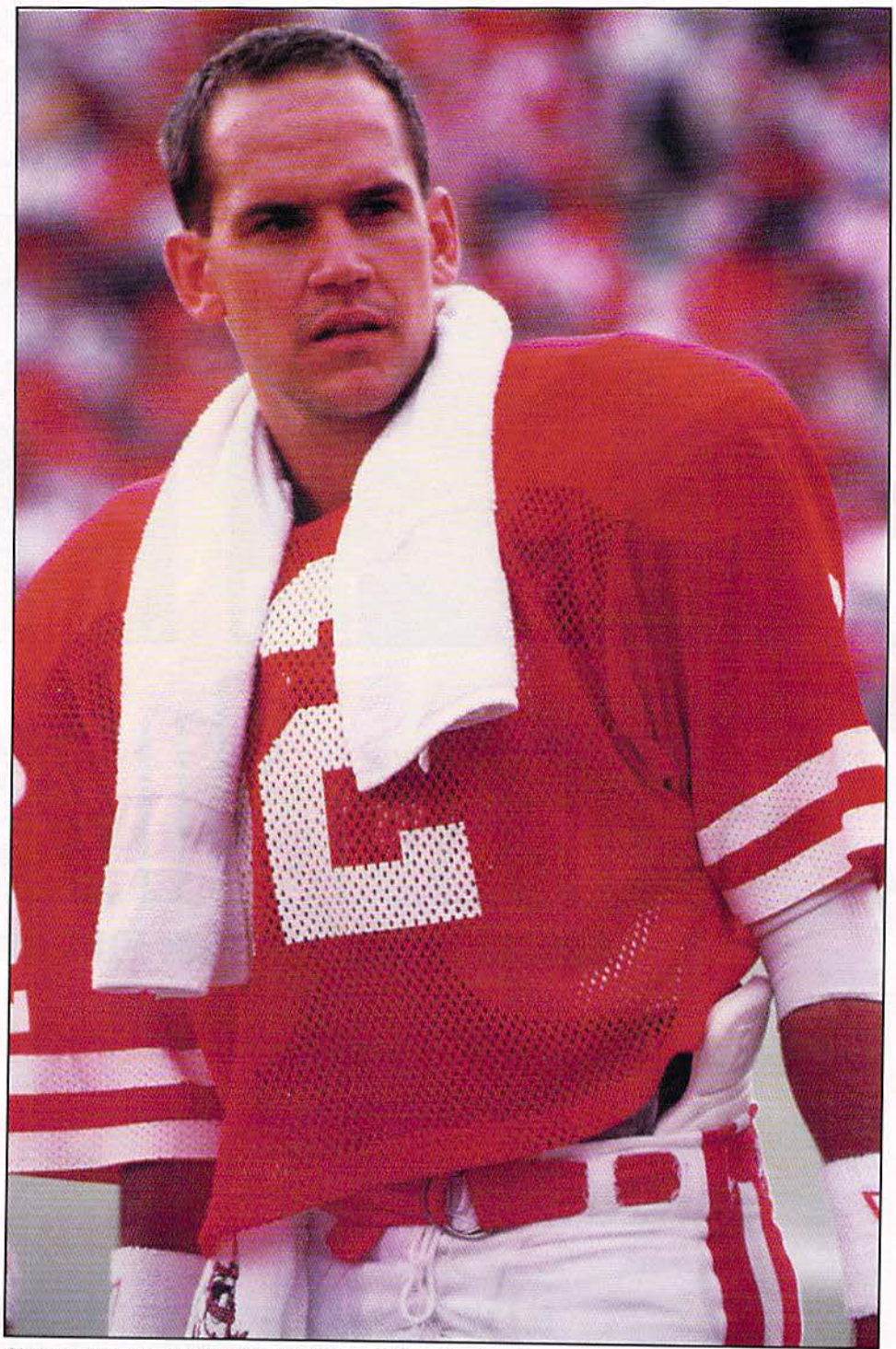
That's when Blakeman, a junior quarterback, learned he would get his first collegiate start, replacing sophomore Steve Taylor, who was ailing with bruised back and ribs.

Blakeman was understandably surprised, but probably not as surprised as his parents, whom he saw and told before the game. "They went into immediate shock," he says.

Even their shock couldn't have been as great as that of the Jayhawks by game's end. Blakeman threw three passes for touchdowns and rushed for another in a 70-0 victory.

A year later in Lincoln, he again started against Kansas and directed a 54-2 victory, completing 10-of-12 passes for 100 yards and a touchdown, to tight end Tom Banderas.

Banderas, who also caught two of the touchdown passes the previous year, writes Blakeman's insurance now. "It really is different how life changes people," says Blakeman, an attorney in his 13th year with the Domina Law firm in Omaha — and a Big 12 game official, in his fourth season.



Clete Blakeman, subbing for the injured Steve Taylor, threw three touchdown passes against Kansas in 1986.

He is the head linesman in his crew, and the only Nebraskan. When the crew is assigned a conference game involving the Cornhuskers, he is sent elsewhere. While the crew worked Nebraska's opening game

against Oklahoma State, he worked Oklahoma's game against North Texas at Norman.

He was as an alternate official at the Nebraska-Utah State game.

When Tim Millis, coordinator of football officials for the Big 12, told him he wouldn't work Nebraska games, it was a "relief," Blakeman says. Although his sense of responsibility would allow him to be impartial where Nebraska is concerned, the perception is that, as a former Cornhusker, he might not be. Plus, he has long held season tickets at Memorial Stadium, though he rarely is able to use them.

This season's Penn State game was an exception. He had that Saturday off.

He also planned to attend the Southern Mississippi game in Hattiesburg because his crew was assigned to work that Saturday's Mississippi-Texas Tech game in Oxford, Miss.

Blakeman became an official with the encouragement of his dad, Glen, a long-time Nebraska high school official. Clete began working high school games with his dad while still in law school, moving up to small colleges and then to the Big 12, as a supplemental official for two seasons.

Last season, he was a "swing guy," working with different crews each week.

He also travels to Lincoln once or twice a week during the football season to officiate Cornhusker practices. Millis, a former NFL official, "doesn't have any problem with it," says Blakeman. Such involvement is a means for conference officials to see as many snaps as they can.

Officiating is demanding. He doesn't just "open a rulebook" the day of a game and "go to work," he says. He and his crew arrive on the Friday before a Saturday game and spend an hour or so watching videotape of how officials handle certain plays from the previous week's conference games.

He also tapes television games. "If you've seen something before, it helps," he says.

Although he is looking for different things now, he developed the discipline to study tape or film during his five years under Osborne, his position coach as well as the head coach.

Blakeman, like most who played for Osborne, came away with an appreciation for his attention to detail and determination to eliminate mental mistakes. During practice, "you just knew he was watching, even when he might not have been," Blakeman says. "But somehow, he always knew.

"He had that calm, cool demeanor. But you didn't mess around with him."

Osborne also played a role in Blakeman's legal career. The expense of three years' worth of law school was defrayed by a post-graduate scholarship funded with Nebraska's shoe contract money.

By the end of his senior season at Nebraska, Blakeman was ready to move on. But "a month after it was over, I missed it already," he says. "Those guys were my fraternity."

He keeps in touch with several teammates, among them Banderas, Steve Stanard and Jon Kelley. He will be the best man at Kelley's wedding, which is scheduled for next spring.

Sixteen years after his final game, Blakeman is still remembered as a Cornhusker. "What amazes me is, I'll meet somebody and they'll recognize my name," he says. "That tells me how much it (Nebraska football) means to everybody in the state. It really is kind of amazing. They don't forget."

Presumably, Kansas has forgotten how he treated the Jayhawks in his two starts against them. It wasn't personal then. And they'll certainly get a fair shake from him now.

Blakeman is still a college football fan, reading Sports Illustrated and the sport pages to keep up. However, "after the kickoff, you've got a job to do." And that job demands objectivity.

Sometimes visiting teams claim they get "homered."

But "that's just not true," he says. "For the most part, you're focused on the colors of helmets and jerseys. It's so fast. In a split-second something can happen. You can't be lollygagging." ■

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Huskers Seeking Center Candidates

Top-ranked line recruit Byers likes Nebraska

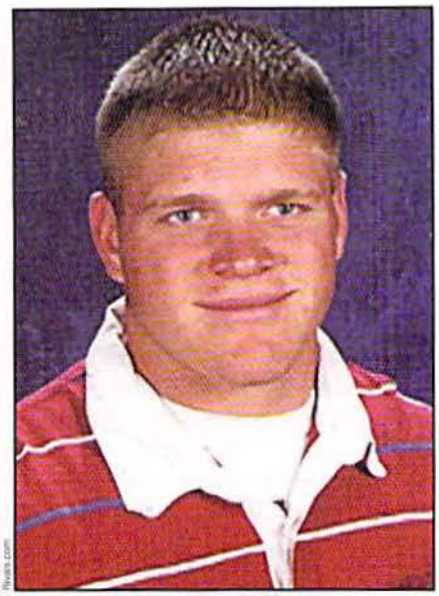
By Doug Horwich

The Husker program is known for producing great centers.

Players like Dave Rimington, Jake Young, Aaron Graham and Dominic Raiola have established a tradition of excellence at the position that few schools can match.

With sophomore Richie Incognito playing the left tackle position and senior center Josh Sewell playing his final season at Nebraska, the Husker staff will have to ensure that a sufficient replacement is found for 2004, in addition to recruiting additional players to develop.

Although three young center candidates are already on the roster in the form of Kurt Mann, Greg Austin and Jermaine Leslie, one or two of those players will probably end up playing offensive guard, leaving the center position in need of additional depth.



Jeff Byers of Loveland, Colo., has attended Nebraska's summer football camp for the past three years.

Although true freshmen very rarely contribute on the offensive line at Nebraska — much less start — there are times in which a player is such a special talent that he actually has a chance to come in and compete immediately for a starting position.

One such player is center Jeff Byers (6-foot-4, 280 pounds, 4.9 40-yard dash) from Loveland High School in Loveland, Colo.

Byers is considered by most recruiting services to be the top-rated offensive line recruit in the country this year. He has attended Nebraska's summer football camp for the past three years, and the Huskers have made his final eight, along with Texas, Notre Dame, Southern California, Ohio State, UCLA, Colorado and Iowa.

Byers is well aware of the fact that there are two Loveland players starting in Nebraska's offense this season and has spoken with both of them about the Husker program.

"Ross Pilkington and Josh Davis both did very well," he said, in reference to the Penn State game. "Josh had a run to the outside, where

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2004

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Lance Brandenburgh	Overland Park, Kan. (St. Thomas Aquinas)	6-1	215	LB
Andy Christensen	Bennington, Neb.	6-3	275	DT
Allan Evridge	Papillion, Neb. (Papillion-LaVista)	6-1	205	QB
Michael Keenan	Kansas City, Mo. (Oak Park)	6-2	220	LB
Maurice McClellan	Pawcatuck, Conn. (Stonington)	6-3	210	ATH
D.T. McDowell	Tucker, Ga.	6-1	190	QB
Terrence Nunn	Houston, Texas (Cypress Falls)	6-0	185	WR
Seth Olsen	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)	6-5	300	OL
Ty Steinkuhler	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)	6-3	235	DE
Nathan Swift	Hutchinson, Minn.	6-3	190	WR

Pilkington flattened a couple of defenders. I was watching the game with some of my teammates, and the place went nuts when that happened — to see the Loveland duo doing so well. They are great players."

Despite the fact that Byers had developed a relationship with retired Husker assistants Milt Tenopir and Dan Young, he has also spoken extensively with new Nebraska offensive line coach Barney Cotton, and the two have developed a solid rapport.

"Their offensive coordinator is Barney Cotton, and I really have gotten to develop a good relationship with him," Byers said. "He's a real easy-going guy to talk to. He's real down to earth. I like his style. He gets in there and shows the guys what they need to do. I'd say I've developed a real good relationship with Coach Cotton, Coach (Ron) Brown, who has been recruiting me, and Coach (Frank) Solich."

Byers is looking to play for a winning program where players and fans have a passion for winning.

"I'm from a very successful program," he said. "I want to be around kids that are a winning group — a bunch that wants to succeed in and out of the classroom and take it seriously. I want to be around good players and coaches. If I feel comfortable with them, I figure they will enjoy me and have the same work ethics."

Byers intends to make a decision by late November to early December, after he has a chance to take either an official or unofficial visit to all eight of his favorite schools.

Another top center who has shown a great deal of interest in Nebraska recently is Danny Muy (6-4, 270, 5.2) from Lincoln High School in Tallahassee, Fla.

Muy has a top two of Alabama and Nebraska but also has written offers from Clemson, Connecticut, East Carolina, Louisville, Middle Tennessee State and South Florida.

Muy may be a late visitor to Nebraska, as his team is a strong contender for a state championship. He recently took an official visit to Alabama and was impressed. Nevertheless, his interest in Nebraska has remained firm.

"When we came back from Alabama we hungered to visit

RECRUITING NOTES

Top Running Back on NU's Wish List

By Rick Shaw

Nebraska coaches are making every effort to sign at least one big-time running back recruit in the class of 2004.

Here is a look at four top running backs currently considering playing for the Huskers in Lincoln:

Andre Brown, 6-foot-1, 210-pounds, Greenville (Rose), N.C. — Brown, a big back from ACC country, can not only gain the tough yards inside but also has the speed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) to make things happen in the open field. Brown rushed for 2,123 yards and 17 touchdowns as a junior and is averaging more than 10 yards per carry as a senior this fall. Brown has an official visit scheduled to Nebraska on Dec. 5 and lists the Huskers, along with North Carolina State, Virginia and LSU as his early favorites.

"I like Nebraska because of the tradition of their running backs," Brown said. "That running game they have is great. It would be fun to go to Nebraska and restore that tradition of the big-play running back."

Brandon Gunn, 5-11, 195, Omaha (Central), Neb. — Gunn is the latest in a long line of Central running backs that made their way to Division I schools. Gunn has attended both the Oklahoma State and Penn State games this fall in Lincoln and plans to make it back again before the end of the season. Although Central started the season a disappointing 1-2, Gunn got off to a good start. He averaged close to 100 yards rushing in the early season. Gunn is weighing offers from Iowa, Iowa State, Colorado, UCLA, Kansas, Kansas State and Wyoming, in addition to Nebraska.

"I don't really have a favorite right now," Gunn said. "I'll take a couple of visits and then go from there. I do like Nebraska though. They are a good football team, and I've never counted them out."

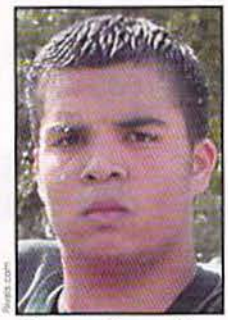
Derron Thomas, 6-0, 185, Reserve (East St. John), La. — Nebraska is recruiting the Bayou State hard this year, and Thomas is one of the Huskers' principal targets. He rushed for 1,580 yards and 20 touchdowns as a junior on only 149 carries. Through two games this season, Thomas has utilized his 4.4 speed to run for 273 yards and three touchdowns on 26 carries. Thomas lists the Huskers in his top five, along with Florida State, Michigan, Colorado and LSU.

"I got to talk to Coach Solich, and he's a good guy," Thomas said. "He and Coach (Tim) Albin tell me that they'd like to see me come up there, so they are definitely a school that I'm looking at. I like the way that the run the ball a lot."

Ja'Kouri Williams, 5-11, 179, Plaquemine, La. — Williams is yet another Louisiana blue-chipper who the Huskers hope to land in February. A dynamite open-field runner, Williams hopes to earn playing time as a college freshman. He lists Nebraska, Tennessee, Florida State and Michigan as his top three schools.

"Coach Albin (of Nebraska) was the first coach to call me in September," Williams said. "Me and Coach Albin have developed a great relationship, and he's showed way more interest in me than anyone else." ■

Nebraska," his father said. "The Alabama visit went quite well. They set a benchmark that no other school has been able to reach. We are confident Nebraska will."


Lineman Danny Muy of Tallahassee, Fla., has Nebraska high on his list.

If Muy's team makes it to the state championship, then he will likely visit Lincoln that weekend.

"We will visit Nebraska right after the state championship, if not during the season," his father said. "Following that game, we will go home that night and leave that very next morning to get there."

Muy is being recruited by Nebraska assistant Bo Pelini, and the two have developed a good relationship.

"We feel really confident speaking to Coach Pelini," Mr. Muy said. "You look at Coach Solich and look at his numbers and what he has been able to accomplish in his first five years, and you see that he is at a better pace than Coach (Tom) Osborne before him. They have a proud school tradition."

The battle for Muy appears to be between Nebraska and Alabama. Muy and his father are Dolphins fans and have a great deal of admiration for the Shula family. However, they also love Nebraska's winning tradition. Muy should be able to make a decision shortly after his official visit to Lincoln.

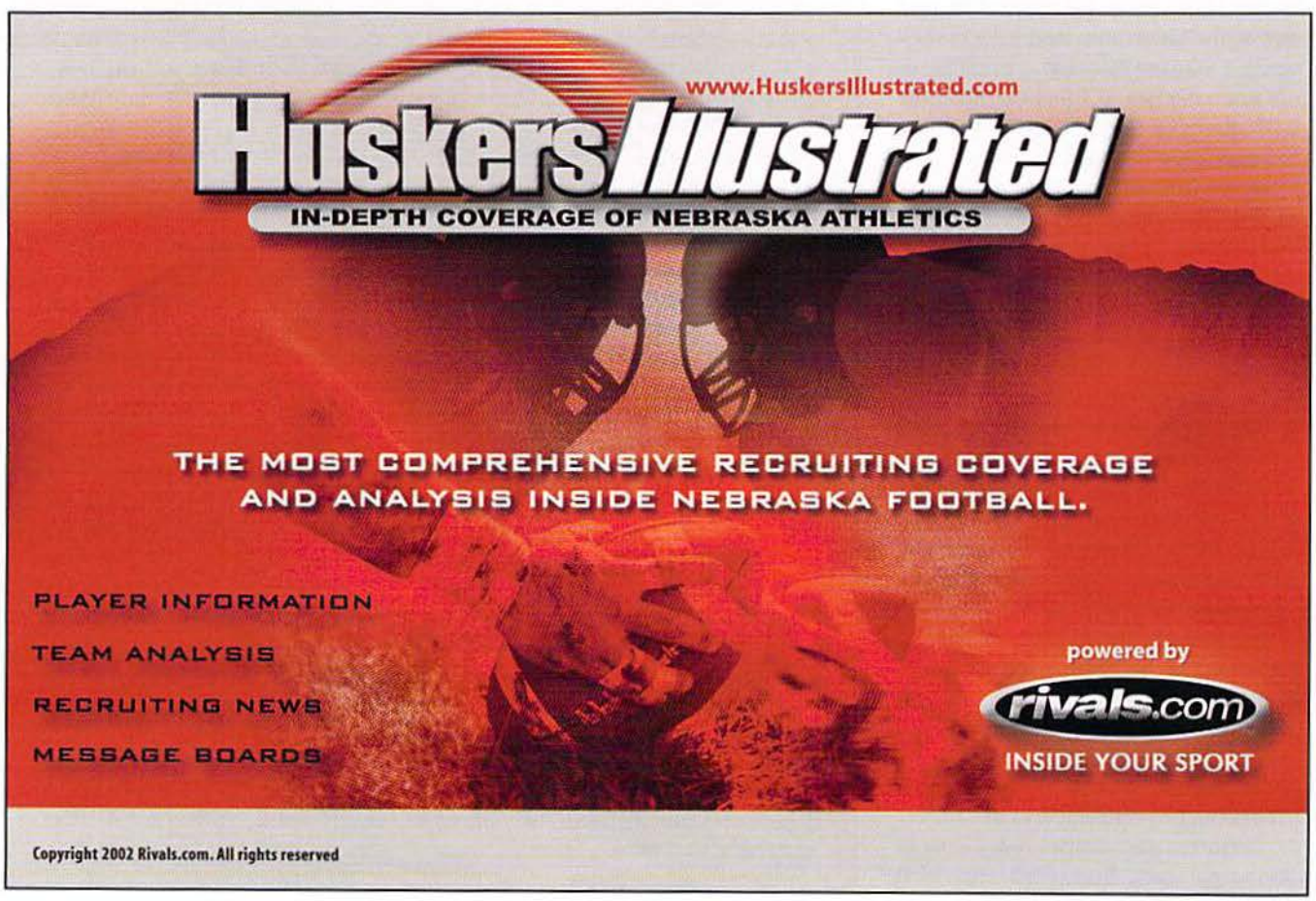
Nebraska is also looking at center/defensive tackle Neil Brown (6-2, 255, 4.9) from Buford High School in Buford, Ga. Brown already has received written offers from Nebraska, Mississippi State, Wake Forest, Duke, Vanderbilt, Connecticut, Alabama-Birmingham, BYU, Indiana, Louisville, Central Florida and Middle Tennessee State.

"I'm looking for strong academics and a strong football program — -a good mixture," Brown said. "It's also very important to me that the coaches are not like typical college football coaches who act nice to get you down there, but when you arrive treat you differently — like you're just something to be used. I want to play for coaches that actually care for you and would treat you like a son. The football tradition is important, too."

Brown is organizing his visit list, but has definite plans to visit Nebraska, Vanderbilt and Wake Forest. Despite being from Georgia, he is not averse to playing for a cold-weather program.

"I actually like playing in the cold weather because the hits you lay on people tend to sting more," Brown said. "I also don't mind playing where it's real hot, but I prefer the cold. Sometimes down here, when it gets chilly, I'll go to practice without a shirt on and my teammates think I'm nuts, but it doesn't bother me at all."

Although Brown has received a large number of offers, Nebraska is the most prestigious program currently recruiting him, and the Husker staff has given him the option of playing either center or defensive tackle. ■



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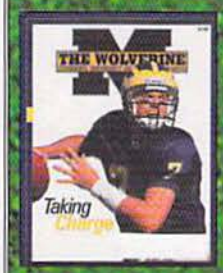

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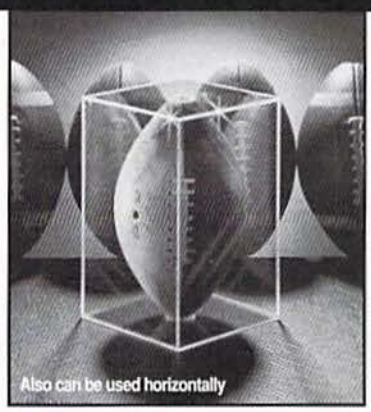

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Tidy Transition

Senior Schrad gives much of the credit to her younger teammates

By Todd Henrichs

Watch Anna Schrad after almost any rally, and you'll see the senior co-captain offering an encouraging word or a pat on the back for one of her young teammates on the Nebraska volleyball team.

It's an important job that Schrad knows so well. For three years, she was the one on the receiving end.

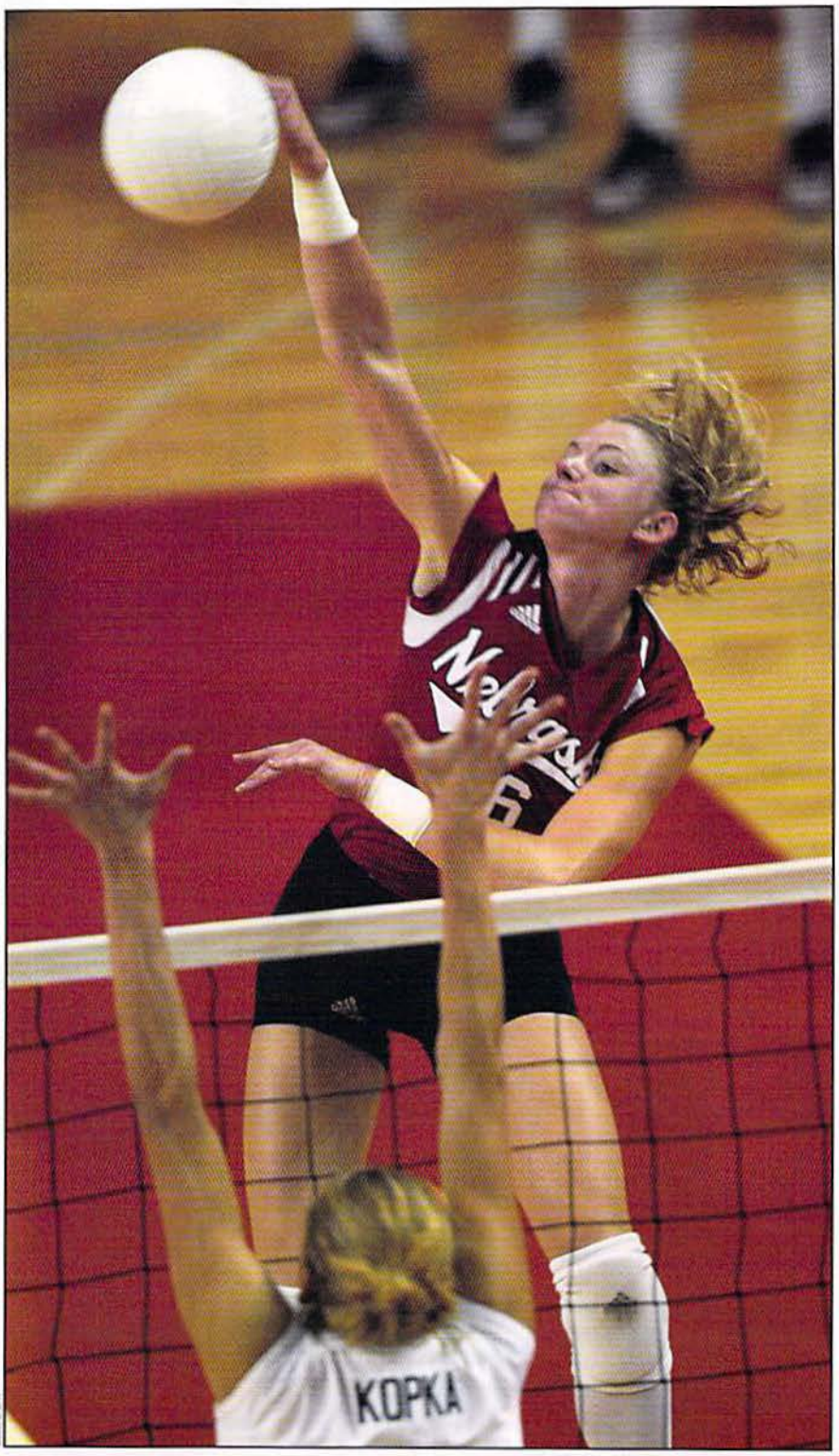
The most experienced Husker on this year's team experienced the most dramatic of role changes in the offseason. Schrad, who played alongside five All-Americans in her first three seasons at NU, suddenly is the veteran on a young team asked to uphold the program's high standards of Big 12 championships and final-four appearances.

The new role has placed Schrad in the spotlight, but the Lincoln Pius X graduate said that's not anything different from recent seasons.

"Before, I was kind of the one to watch because I was the young one out there," Schrad said. "I know I was under coach's eye a lot.

"Now it's nice to be on the other end of it for a while."

Schrad certainly deserves some of the credit for what outwardly appears as an orderly transition within the program. Head coach John Cook said the chemistry on this year's team is the best it's been since



Senior co-captain Anna Schrad averaged a career-best 3.71 kills per game over Nebraska's first nine matches.

2000 when Schrad was a freshman, and Nebraska surprised everyone by rolling to the national championship.

Nebraska won't go unbeaten this year, having lost to highly regarded Georgia Tech in non-conference play. But the Huskers — with true freshmen Dani Busboom and Christina Houghtelling and redshirt freshman Kelsey Fautsch all playing key roles — are likely to only get better as the matches go by and could be dangerous at tournament time.

"That's what we all have to keep in mind," Cook said.

Schrad said the same is true with her own play in the early part of the season.

As Nebraska's go-to offensive player, Schrad averaged a career-best 3.71 kills per game over the Huskers' first nine matches. She had a career-high 22 kills in a win at Illinois State and added 20 against Georgia Tech.

The disappointment was in her .220 hitting efficiency, a mark which is expected to climb steadily as Nebraska gets more comfortable with its two-setter system.

Defensively, Schrad has appeared more comfortable this season than in any point in her career. Some of that can be attributed to her experience, which included a stint practicing within the U.S. National Team program this summer.

But Schrad said much of the credit should go to her younger teammates.

"I just feel like I'm not concentrating so much on what I do," Schrad said, "and I feel like I play better if I don't have to think about that.

"Having to worry about five other girls out on the floor plus two more that are coming in off the bench every couple of plays takes my mind off of what I'm doing. I think it frees me up a little bit to be a better leader and player."

Schrad expects the young players on Nebraska's team to be confident veterans by the time the postseason rolls around. As for her first tournament experience, that's a time Schrad won't soon forget.

With starter Laura Pilakowski recovering from surgery, Schrad was suddenly called upon to start the Huskers' final two regular-season matches and in rounds one and two of the NCAA Tournament her freshman year.

Schrad came up with 15 kills and 17 digs in a dramatic five-game win at Kansas State that capped a perfect regular season. She again produced 17 digs as the Huskers had to scrap past South Carolina in the tournament.

"I'd say when I got thrown in there, I was pretty nervous," Schrad said. "These girls have been in a lot of big situations already. They'll know how to handle it."

It helps to have a veteran leader, someone who's seen it all in her career.

Yet Schrad said it helps to feel like she's going through everything for the first time again. And she's anxious to see where the ride takes this year's group.

"It's kind of exciting because it's definitely different than what I've had the last three years," Schrad said. "You always knew what to expect last year. This year, it's been fun to have something different going on every day." ■

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CROSSWORD

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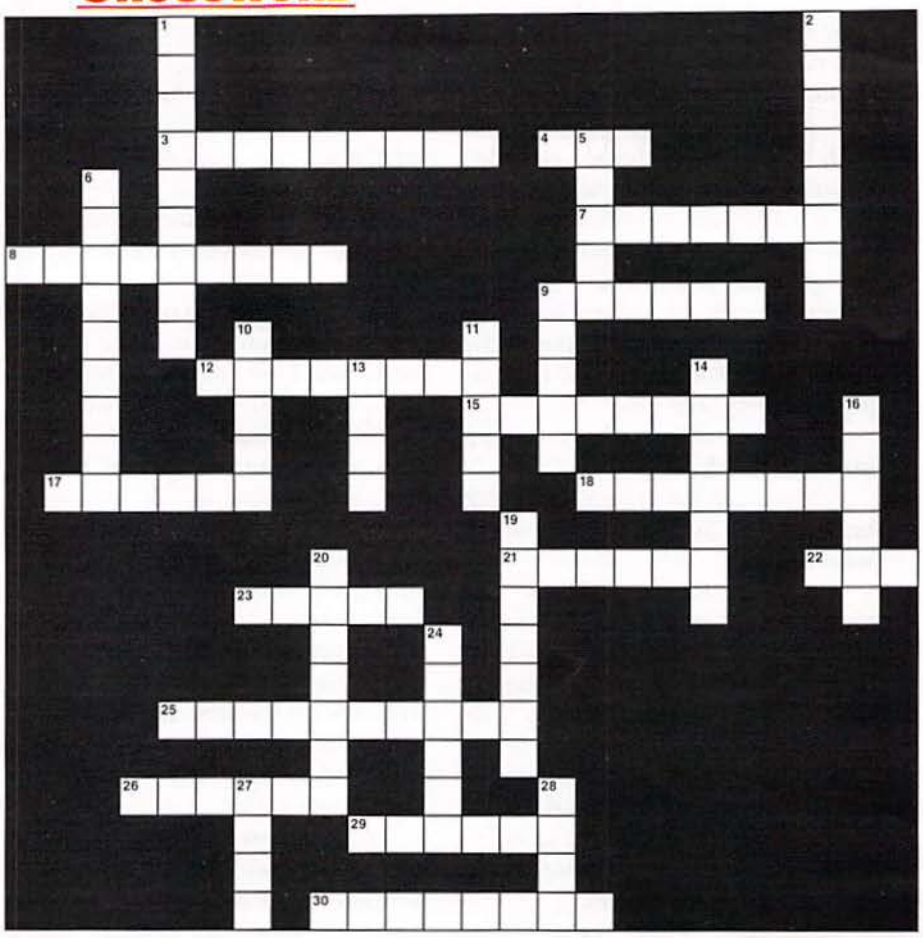

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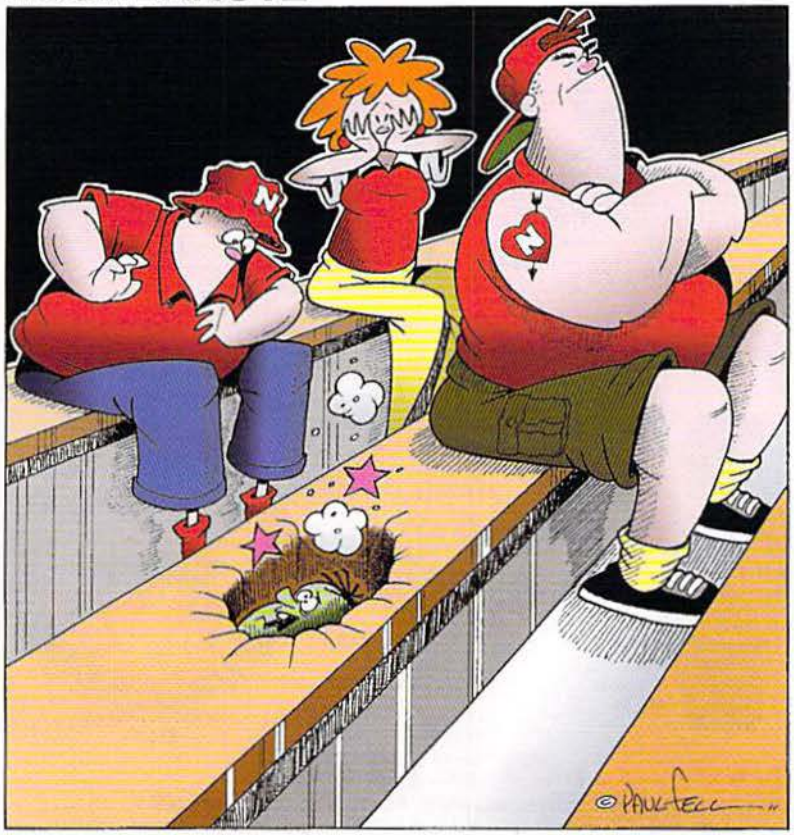

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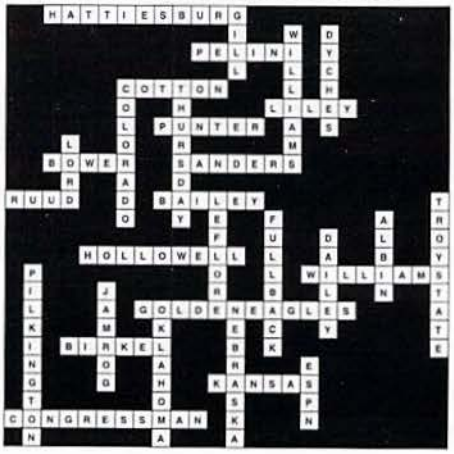

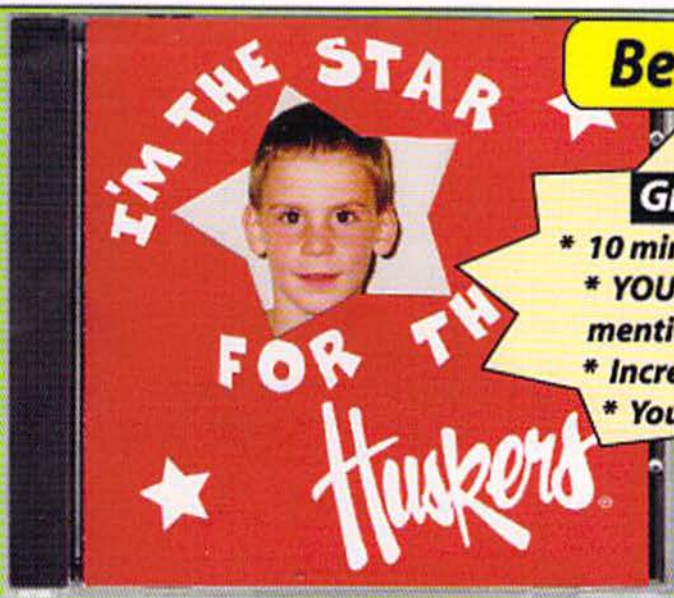

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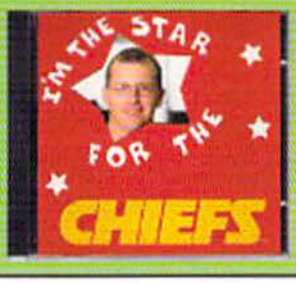

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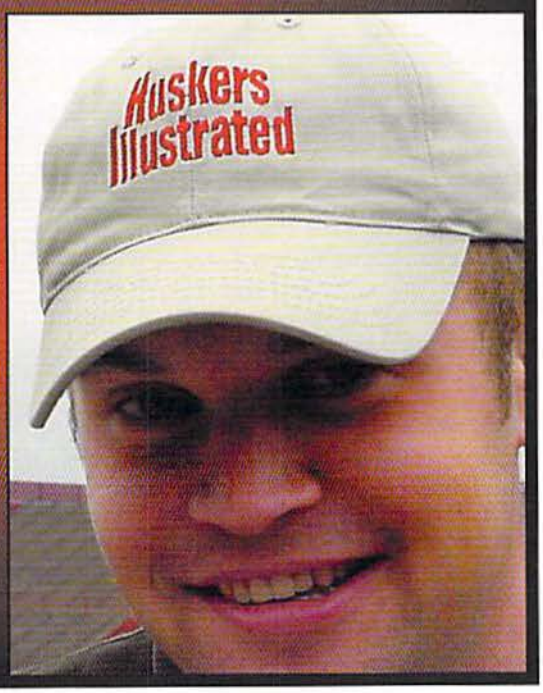

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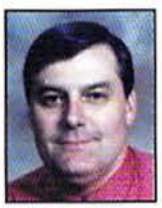
Lofty Goal

Creating turnovers all in a day's work for this year's Nebraska defense



Mike BABCOCK

THE ISSUE is subject to debate, certainly. But setting a goal of forcing five turnovers seems a bit lofty, wouldn't you agree? Well, Nebraska defensive coordinator Bo Pelini wouldn't. "You've got to set your sights high," he said following a 38-14 victory against Southern Mississippi.

And five was the goal he set for the defense in Hattiesburg.

High is one thing. Lofty is another. But Pelini's players made no distinction.

"We wanted five turnovers in this game, and we went out and got five turnovers," said Josh Bullocks. "We were looking for six, too, so we're always looking for more."

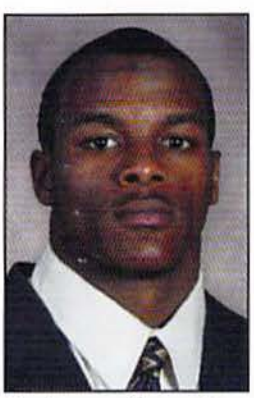
The sophomore free safety contributed one of the five, intercepting a pass and returning it 41 yards early in the second quarter, to set up the Cornhuskers' second touchdown.

Cornerback Fabian Washington tipped the ball, which "was floating right in the air," Bullocks said. "So I had to run over and get it. I grabbed the ball and the only thing I was thinking about was, 'Get in the end zone.' You know, I came pretty close to it, but I should have got in there."

That became the responsibility of I-back David Horne, who scored from 3 yards out.

Still, Bullocks could take satisfaction in helping to set the tone.

"As a whole unit, as a whole defense, you want to go out there and create turnovers," he said. "That's what we're all about, just going out there, playing hard and running to the football."



Sophomore free safety Josh Bullocks has four interceptions.

Through four games, that has come to characterize the Cornhusker defense. The Blackshirts have forced 15 turnovers: eight fumble recoveries and seven interceptions.

"That's what we stress, trying to tackle the ball," said middle linebacker Barrett Ruud, who has recovered three of the fumbles, including one against Southern Mississippi, preceding the second of quarterback Jammal Lord's long touchdown passes, to Isaiah Fluellen.

Ruud's three recoveries tie the school single-season record for a linebacker.

"If you don't get turnovers, you're not doing your job," he said.

Last season, Nebraska forced 21 turnovers in 14 games.

Forcing a fourth that many in a single game didn't seem all that unreasonable of a goal to weakside linebacker Demorrio Williams, who had 12 tackles and also recovered a fumble, to stop a third-quarter drive that reached the Nebraska 25-yard line.

"Coming from this defense, I never have any doubt about what we can do," he said.

Williams also sacked Southern Miss quarterback Dustin Almond and was a general nuisance to the Golden Eagles' offense, repeating what he has done in every game this season.

"He's just had an incredible year," said Coach Frank Solich. "He's been great, not only against the run but against the pass. He's not only a super competitor, but he makes big plays for you.

"He's so instinctive and so talented . . . he's a great player."

Creating turnovers is all in a day's work, according to Williams. "As a defensive player, we always have an offensive mentality that we've got to make plays," he said. "Our main thing is just to put our offense in great position so they can put the ball in the end zone."

The offense has come to expect that, according to I-back Josh Davis, though how the Blackshirts do it, he doesn't know. "They just make turnovers happen," he said.

"So we have to be ready to go into the game."

The ability to create turnovers is a result of "a combination of things," Solich said.

Speed is one of those things, as is experience. Plus, "it's obvious that we're doing more," he said. "I know as a former offensive coordinator, calling plays, if you're going to line up (defensively) and you're going to show them the same coverage play after play, they're going to take advantage of it some unless you're just controlling things on the line of scrimmage and have such a great pass rush that they can't get some things done. I think we're complex enough to where it's a little bit of a guessing game."

Also, "we're not having breakdowns with our starting unit, and I think that's a key."

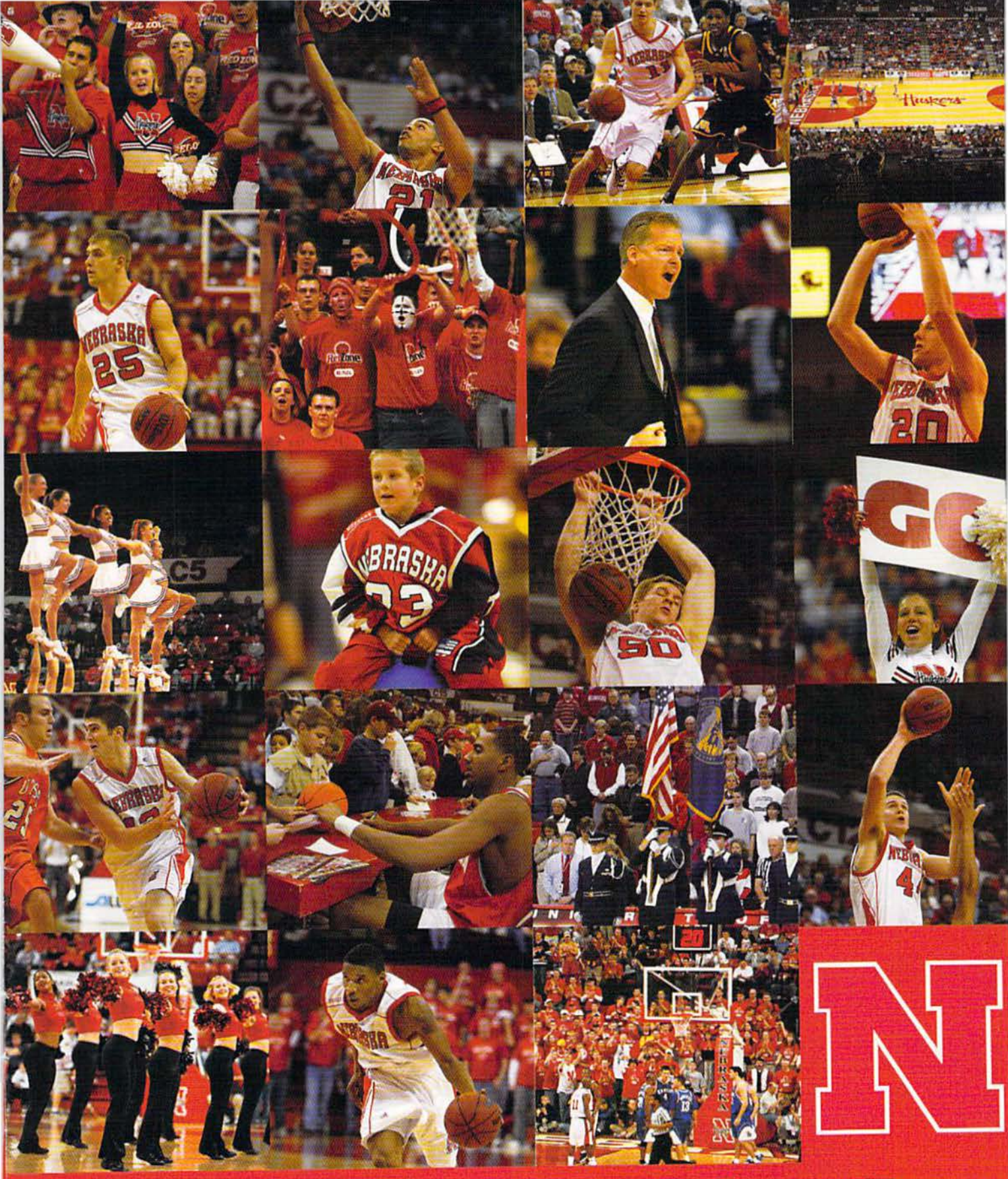
An offense can contribute to its own problems, of course, and Southern Miss did. But the five turnovers were "due to the fact that we were running to the ball, getting to the ball, making good pursuit to the ball, running hard," said Bullocks. "It just got the offense kind of nervous.

"I guess they weren't as prepared for what we were going to throw at them."

Preparation is a significant factor, along with the speed and experience. Plus, the defense is playing with a single-mindedness that might have been missing to some degree last season.

"It's a different team, a different attitude and more confidence," said Bullocks, whose four interceptions lead the nation. "We've got new coaches now, and they are more of players' coaches. All the players on the team seem to like the coaches."

And they do what the coaches ask. Pelini asked for five turnovers. That's what he got. ■



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